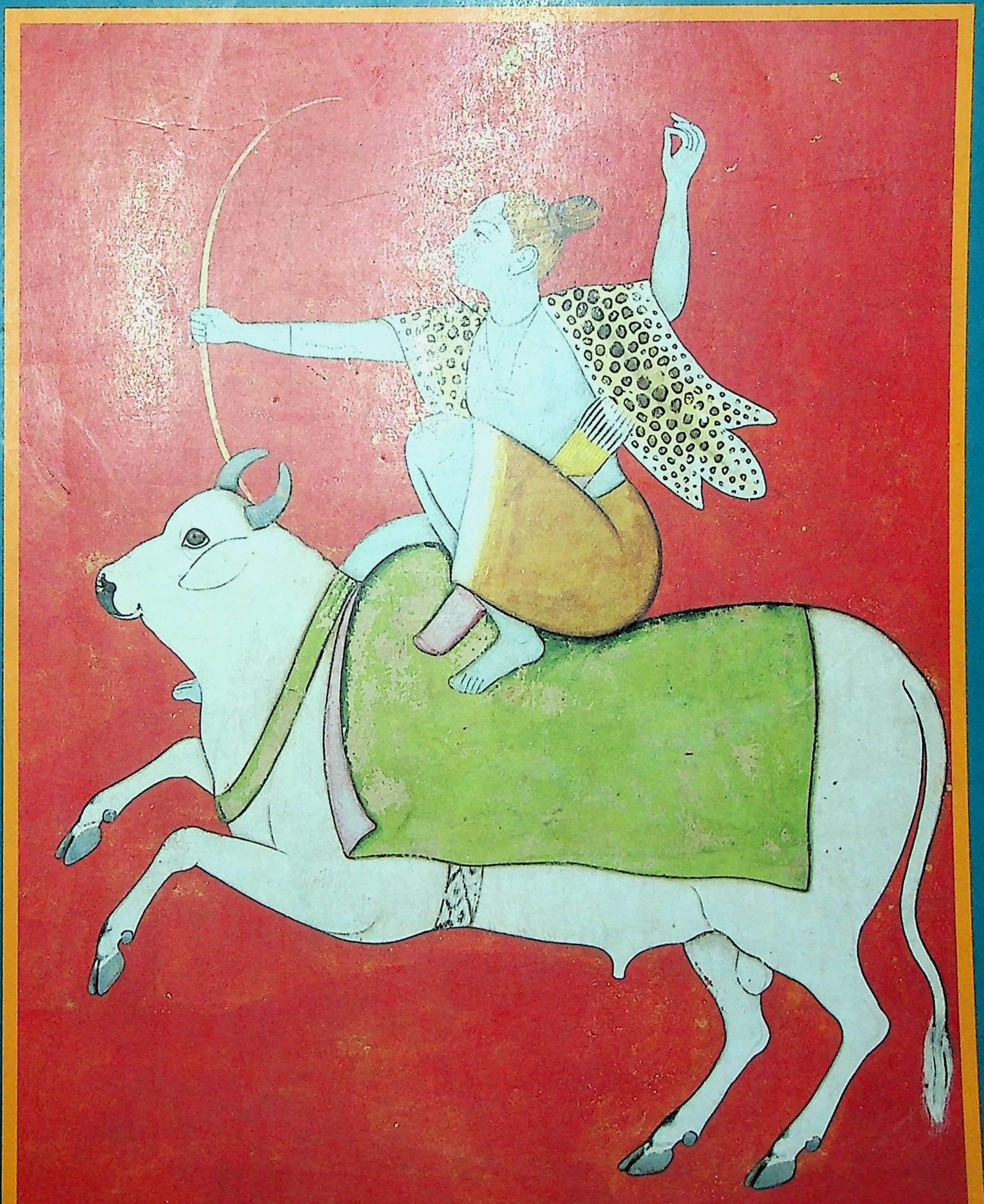
ESSENCE OF INDIAN ART



ASIAN ART MUSEUM OF SAN FRANCISCO

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पुस्तक-वितरण की तिथि नीचे अंकित है । इस तिथि सहित २० वें दिन तक यह पुस्तक पुस्तकालय में वापिस आ जानी चाहिए । अन्यथा १० पैसे के हिसाब से विलम्ब-दण्ड लगेगा ।

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ESSENCE OF INDIAN ART

B. N. GOSWAMY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEAN-LOUIS NOU

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Essence of Indian Art has been made possible by generous grants from

National Endowment for the Humanities

The Museum Society

Friends of the Exhibition
Government of India
Air India
Indo-U.S. Subcommission on Education and Culture
Asian Art Museum Foundation
The Society for Asian Art
Richard B. Gump
Asian Cultural Council
California Arts Council
Publicity and Advertising Fund of the Hotel Tax Fund, The Gap, Inc., and KKHI AM-FM

Exhibition dates:
Galeries nationales du Grand Palais March 13–June 16, 1986
Asian Art Museum of San Francisco August 9–November 9, 1986

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ISBN 0-939117-00-2
LC 86-71517

Front cover: Shiva the Archer (entry 128)
Back cover: The Ascetic Boy after his First Experience of Sex (entry 199)
Frontispiece: Manifestations of Vishnu: The Aureole from Devsar (entry 172)

Editing by Lorna Price and Nancy Hock
Proofreading by Catherine A. Cambron
Design and Production by Ed Marquand Book Design
Typography by Type Gallery
Printed and bound in Japan by Nissha Printing Co., Ltd.

Photographic credits: Photographs for the exhibition were taken in India and Paris by Jean-Louis Nou with the cooperation of the Association Francaise d'Action Artistique, Paris, and Pierre Cambon, Curator, Musée Guimet. Special contributions: Mamiya, photographic equipment; Agfa-Gevaert, film; and Godard, electronic flash. The following photographs were taken by Dirk Bakker, courtesy of the National Gallery, Washington, D.C.: pp. 2, 55, 118, 155, 167, 250, 256.

FESTIVAL

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FOREWORD

If you wish to know something about India, you must empty your mind of all preconceived notions of what you have heard or read . . . India is different, and exasperating as it must seem, would like to remain so! You will not find any of your formal labels useful. India is many and it is one. It has incredible diversity yet it is bound in a unity that stretches way back into unwritten history. There is hardly a thought in philosophy, science or the arts of which you will not find some grain in India . . . In all the ups and downs in its long history, India's culture, mores and traditions have been continuously evolving, shaped by its many experiences within itself and influenced from outside. It has not hesitated to adopt, adapt and absorb new ideas.

SO SAID THE late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi—the person most responsible for the Festival of India and, in turn, this exhibition.

From the high mountains of the north to the ocean-bothered shores of the south, India encompasses a universe complete unto itself—a universe that is reflected in the diversity and the variety of sculptures and paintings represented in the "Essence of Indian Art," an exhibition that has had an appropriately long course in coming to San Francisco. Originating in discussion with the Festival of India and the Indo-U.S. Subcommission some three years ago, the exhibition marks the conclusion of perhaps the largest such festival ever to take place in this country.

Among the many exhibitions of the Festival, "Essence" alone comes entirely from India. The great national collections of India have contributed generously from their treasuries, and, therefore, no loans were required from the extensive and important collections in our own country.

At the suggestion of both the Festival officials and Dr. B. N. Goswamy of Panjab University it was decided to join with Association Francaise d'Action Artistique and Musée Guimet in the presentation of the exhibition scheduled to be shown at the Grand Palais in Paris. The felicitous coincidence of a major exhibition already scheduled for Paris solved many problems while presenting us with a major opportunity. Chief Curator Clarence Shangraw and I traveled to Paris at the opening of the exhibition there. Distinguished visitors from India joined with Madame Mitterand and former Minister of Culture Jack Lang in dedicating the exhibition and catalogue to the memory of our late friend Jean Riboud, who, with his wife, Krishna Riboud, had long served in the advancement in France and the United States of greater understanding of the arts of India. The acclaimed exhibition served as the climax of this year's India festival in France, as it also will here.

We were fortunate in being able to work with Dr. B. N. Goswamy, whose authority on the subject of Indian painting made him the obvious and happy choice for Guest Curator. Dr. Goswamy suggested an unusual approach to an exhibition of Indian art. He proposed using the nine *rasas,* or sentiments, previously applied to arts of the stage. The use of *rasa* for grouping sculpture and paintings is unique to this exhibition, and our hope is that the employment of the *rasas* will allow the viewer greater access to Indian art. The importance here of *rasas* is that they provide a key to understanding the methods Indian artists used to provoke a particular response from their audience. We are especially grateful to Dr. Goswamy for his work, his ideas, and for his excellent cooperation in this large and challenging international loan exhibition.

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May I also thank here Mrs. Pupul Jayakar, stalwart and gracious champion for the Festival of India cause and program in the United States. Busier than an ambassador—and more traveled—Mrs. Jayakar always stood ready to assist and lead us along a tortuous path to a successful installation. Our gratitude is permanent. We also thank S. K. Mishra, Director-General of the Festival of India.

Many of the Festival staff were involved from the beginning of our plans, but I would like to mention the good help we received from Mr. Niranjan Desai of the Embassy in Washington and Mr. Didar Singh of the Consulate in New York. They worked closely with us and with the Indo-U.S. Subcommission. Much assistance came from Mr. Vijay Singh of the Festival staff in New Delhi. To each we are most thankful.

The "Essence of Indian Art" benefited greatly from the attentions and good guidance of our friend and former Consul-General in San Francisco, His Excellency K. S. Bajpai, Ambassador of India to the United States. The ambassador served as a catalyst in many aspects of funding. Mrs. Bajpai kindly worked with us on many planning details. The current Consul-General of India in San Francisco, Mr. Deb Mukharji, and Mrs. Mukharji were also of excellent help in many stages of our planning.

The offices of the City and County of San Francisco contributed critical help to us in the presentation of the exhibition. Mr. Peter Henschel and Ms. Betty Lim of Mayor Dianne Feinstein's office are owed special thanks for help in arrangements for the exhibition. Ms. Judy Teichman of the City Attorney's Office offered invaluable help in all matters legal.

The Indo-U.S. Subcommission was often of special help. Mr. Ted Tanen, Executive Director, gave generously of his time and expertise. A member of the Subcommission, Mr. Porter McCray, a friend of long standing of the Asian Art Museum, interceded on our behalf, as did Mr. Richard Lanier of the Asian Cultural Council.

We thank the numerous lenders to the exhibition. Their generosity is extraordinary.

In New Delhi we benefited greatly from the advice and counsel of our friends, Mr. Mohammed Yunus, Mr. Romi Chopra, Mr. and Mrs. Salmon Haidar, Mr. Martand Singh, Mr. and Mrs. Abbas Ali Baig and Dr. Joanna Williams. And particular thanks must go to Mrs. Krishna Riboud. This wise and elegant person took up the cause of the "Essence of Indian Art" with determination and great good spirit. We will not forget all she did to make this exhibition possible.

Also in New Delhi, Dr. Laxmi Sihare, Director of the National Museum, a man of unequivocal dedication to his distinguished institution, despite enormous logistical problems finally succeeded in delivering to this nation and to France exhibitions of the highest order. We sympathize with the hardships he and his staff endured. We are grateful for the exhibition.

Mr. Warren Faus, Chairman of this museum, and Mr. James Gerstley, Chairman of the Asian Art Museum Foundation led us with understanding and a good amount of patience. Mrs. Brayton Wilbur, Jr., chaired the exhibition steering committee with Mr. Kishore Kripalani. Members of this committee and of the Friends of the Exhibition, chaired by Chan Desaigoudar, are listed elsewhere in the catalogue. The exhibition would have had no chance of success without the excellent work of this group. Mrs. Wilbur also traveled with me to India in the final stages of our negotiations. Mrs. Robert Sellers, faithful and energetic chairman of our exhibitions committee has enthusiastically supported the exhibition. Mrs. Martin Skewes-Cox of the Museum Society graciously steered a course of good support for the exhibition from among the impressive membership of the Asian Art Museum and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. We thank Mrs. Skewes-Cox and the membership for their support.

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The National Endowment for the Humanities granted the exhibition a large funding award. This funding was the key to staging the exhibition. We are pleased and honored to work with the Endowment.

The Society for Asian Art is chaired by Mrs. Lewis Lowe, a knowledgeable and effective leader in our community. The Society embraced the exhibition and lent us wonderful support. Mr. Richard Gump contributed to the exhibition and loaned a series of remarkable prints on India which are on display in conjunction with the exhibition.

Mr. Couric Payne traveled to Paris to see the exhibition as he planned for our bookstore. Indeed, many of the staff of the Museum Society and of the de Young and Legion of Honor worked with us in telling harmony to assure achievement of our goals. I would like here to thank Ian White, Whitney Hall and Gus Teller—among many others—for their cooperation.

In the end the work of assembling the catalogue, arranging for the exhibition and its installation, and attending details fell upon the staff of the Asian Art Museum. I would need the words and expressions of Tagore were my thanks to them to be adequately expressed, particularly our Chief Curator Clarence Shangraw, Curator of Indian Art, Terese Tse Bartholomew, her assistants, the capable Nancy Hock and Padma Kaimal, Curator of Education Richard Mellott, Assistant Curator So Kam Ng, Linden Chubin of Education / Outreach, Director of Development Ann Squires, her assistant DeAnn Borshay, Accountant Osman Rumjahn, Registrar Jack Foss, Assistant Registrar Nancy Macko, Conservator Alexis Pencovic, Assistant Conservator Richard Barden, and Jack Dowty, our Administrative Deputy, the thoroughgoing Sigrid Fink, Librarian Fred Cline, Public Relations Coordinator Ruth Anderson, and our capable preparators headed by Glen Shafer. They performed their tasks brilliantly. May I also thank former director Yvon d'Argencé, who began the processes that led to our exhibition.

This exhibition is a manifest tribute to Indian art. Mrs. Gandhi's farsighted launching of a festival of exhibitions and performances has done much to better inform Americans about her country, but it has done more. It has thrilled us with the wonder of Indian art and culture.

Rand Castile
Director

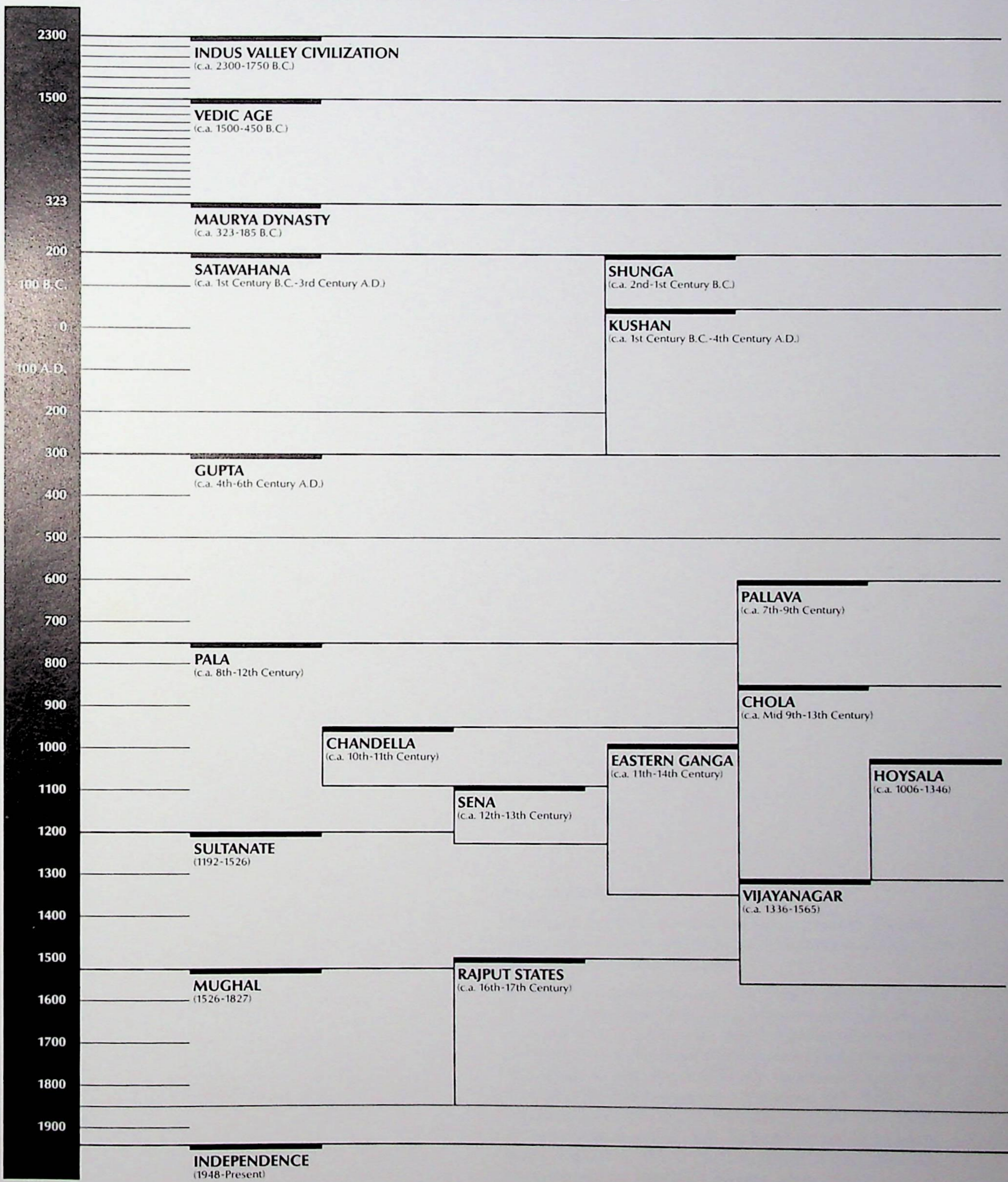
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CATALOGUE

Note to the Reader

Diacritical marks in the text have been omitted. Dimensions of works of art are included whenever available. Text references in the essay include:

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, New York, 1934; Manomohan Ghosh. *The Natyashastra, a Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics, Ascribed to Bharata - Muni*, rev. 2nd ed., VI, Calcutta, 1967; Raniero Gnoli. *Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta*, Varanasi, 1971; Vishwanatha, *Sahityadarpana*. Bombay, 1923; (or *The Mirror of Composition*. trans., J.R. Ballantyne and Pramadesa Mitra, Calcutta, 1875; Stella Kramrisch (trans). *The Visnudharmottara*, Part III, Calcutta, 1928.

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RASA: DELIGHT OF THE REASON

IF ONE WERE NOT so much immersed in it oneself, it could be quite an experience to attend a recital in India of classical Indian music simply to observe the responses of the listeners. We can think of a great Indian vocalist presenting, interpreting, a *raga*, the audience sitting on the floor, not far from him, not far even physically, but quite close, almost within touching distance, accompanists in place, instruments tuned. As the singer opens with the slow, ruminative passage of pure voice movement with no words used, the *alaap*, something that—depending upon which tradition, or *gharana*, he comes from—he can elaborate upon and embellish very considerably (being in no hurry at all, in a deliberate, leisurely fashion), one would notice several persons in the audience closing their eyes, inclining their heads slightly, and slowly, very slowly swaying with a gentle, lyrical movement. An occasional nodding or shaking of the head becomes visible. The listeners open their eyes ever so briefly from time to time to look at the singer when he provides a surprising twist or adds a new flourish or grace, but generally they appear as if they were hearing the note patterns twice over: once physically, through the ears, as being performed at that moment and in that space; but also inwardly at the same time, in the mind's ear, as it were. It is as if they know the pattern well and are seeking some kind of confirmation, a correspondence between what is in their minds and what they are hearing at this moment. The cadenced, almost involuntary motions of the singer's hands vary greatly from performance to performance. As he gets into the body of the *raga*, eyes often closed, his gestures lend emphasis, complete a statement, suggest other possibilities, open different kinds of windows. While he does this, a certain number of listeners can also be seen picking up these movements imperceptibly, not matching each gesture of the singer with their own but catching the essence of the motions, for these go with the unheard music within them.

When the opening passage yields to the next, developing the theme of the *raga*, also slow but accompanied by a beat and adding words, the number of people in the audience who seem to become one with the singer increases appreciably, for picking up the pattern of the beat is simpler than getting the nuances of complex unaccompanied arrangements of notes. A palpable excitement enters the atmosphere. The heads begin to nod more surely, the emphasis remaining on the slight downward jerk as it synchronizes with each ending of a cycle in the beat; hands move still faintly but discernibly, now echoing the rhythm in the beat. Occasionally, as the singer introduces a new element, using microtonal graces, catching even the attuned members of the audience with a move that surprises, the hint of a smile passes from singer to listeners. One also picks up short snatches of articulated praise or enthusiasm: they do not disturb the performer in the least and are even acknowledged sometimes with a slight nod of the head.

This goes on for a length of time and, depending upon the abilities of the audience, its *utsaha* or energy, a clear exchange, a rapport, is established between the two. When the singer takes the *raga* into a more complex stage and takes *taans*, those dazzlingly elaborate virtuoso permutations and combinations of notes along the ascending or descending scale, he frequently leaves the audience behind, for it is difficult either to predict what he is going to do or to keep pace with those mercurial, lightning turns and twists of voice.

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Then, in a faster tempo, when the theme or the burden of the composition is picked up again, a new energy seems to be released among the listeners. Now two different kinds of exchanges take place, those between the singer and audience, and those between him and his accompanists, the player of a stringed instrument such as the *sarangi*, or the percussionist using a pair of *tabla* drums. The singer suddenly springs surprises of all kinds, uses crossrhythms, while the percussionists try to keep pace, even anticipate him on occasions, as if a game of great sophistication were being played among them, all within the approved, strictly laid-down ambit of a *raga*.

At the same time, between singer and listeners, sometimes even between the instrumental accompanists and the listeners, a new rapport is established. Eyes close and then open again in surprise or admiration; heads sway, and whole bodily movements become accentuated. Since the singer is using poetry that is by this point familiar to the audience (if it were not known to it previously), and the burden of the song is fully understood and identified with, one can hear the last words of a verse sung by the performer being picked up and softly whispered by the more alert listeners.

It is all very spontaneous, the unstudied quality emphasizing the involvement of the audience with the *raga*, with the whole recital. A certain glistening of the eyes becomes evident; a mood seems to pervade. There are no paroxysms of delight, no outbursts that distract the singer: all that these gentle movements of head and hands, the meaningful exchanges between singer and listeners, signify is that they are with the singer, feeling distinct vibrations within themselves, even perfecting the rendering of the song by the force of their own imagination and emotion.

At this point, regardless of the theme of the song incorporated in the *raga*—it could be love-in-union, or love-in-separation, or even a song about death or the final realities of life; this is immaterial—a certain lifting of the spirits among the listeners becomes noticeable. No depression descends, even if the burden of the music is sad; on the other hand, there is an elevation of the mind, a rushing forward. It is as if a spark had jumped from singer to listeners. A particularly graceful or difficult movement of notes, an uncommon elegance improvised and inducted into the structure of the *raga*, a verse that has suddenly assumed the character of a revelation because so ably and creatively interpreted by the singer, send a tingle down the spine of many a listener. The word frequently used in India to describe this sensation is horripilation, hair standing on end. The audience is having an experience of delight: it is tasting *rasa*.

I remember from my childhood—I could not have been more than seven or eight years of age at the time—witnessing a performance by a traveling theatrical troupe that came to a little town called Shakargarh, now in Pakistan. My father, a judicial officer who held court ten days in a month away from his district headquarters, was on a tour of that place, and we children were accompanying him.

The touring company, as it was called, had come and pitched its tents in the open space behind the civil rest-house in which we were staying. They set up a raised stage with the roughest of materials; the curtains with sceneries painted on them were all installed during the day, as we stood around and watched. The musical mixed a great deal of singing by the actors with dialogues which were also mostly in rhyme, following the tradition that I now know to be Parsi theatre, was titled *Wamaq Azra*. None of us understood what the title meant, and it was only much later that I found out that these were the names of two lovers from a famous Persian love legend.

There was excitement when a group of barkers went around the town distributing handbills and making announcements on a horn concerning the performance. There was no entry fee, as the play must have been sponsored by some local patron. A fair crowd gathered in the evening, and we children sneaked out of our rest-house rooms and stood at the back. There were no elaborate lights, no sets but

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for the painted backdrops, but there was music before the performance began to keep the audience quiet and entertained.

I recall absolutely nothing of the story or the quality of the performance. All that I vividly remember is the sustained music played on traditional instruments throughout the performance, and occasional outbursts of despair from the actors. Clearly, it was an emotion-charged play, full of situations that must have been easy for the spectators to comprehend and identify with. For me, much remained opaque: the language was too high-flown, being some kind of Persianized Urdu, and the plot was outside my reach.

But the music that belonged to the performance apart, what stands out in my mind is the sound of suppressed sobbing that came from the audience. The situation in the play must have been of unbearable grief, arising from some kind of irreversible separation, and several members of the audience seemed to be choked with feeling, silent tears flowing, mouths dry, a lump in their throats that evidently refused to go away. The performance had obviously led to a certain melting of the heart. I remember seeing with a sense of bewilderment grown men wiping tears silently from their eyes and holding their heads between their hands—trying to suppress emotions, anxious not to display them—covering the lower parts of their faces in the coarse cotton sheets that served as wraps around their shoulders in the slight chill of the evening. The spectators seemed to be a rustic, uncouth group of people, but evidently they responded to the performance and were deeply moved by it. Today I would say, recalling that evening, that they were experiencing an aesthetic emotion occasioned by the performance.

THE SINGLE MOST important term that figures in the formal theory of art developed in India from very early times is undoubtedly *rasa*. To understand the term outwardly is not difficult, and its several meanings are within easy reach. In its most obvious sense, the sense in which it is still employed most widely in daily parlance in India, it means the sap or juice of plants, extract, fluid. In this physical sense, it is easy to identify: when one speaks thus of the *rasa* of orange or sugarcane, for instance, one is certain that the word means the same thing to everyone. In its secondary sense, *rasa* signifies the nonmaterial essence of a thing, "the best or finest part of it," like perfume, which comes from matter but is not so easy to describe or comprehend. In its tertiary sense, *rasa* denotes taste, flavor, relish related to consuming or handling either the physical object or taking in its nonphysical properties, often yielding pleasure.

In its final and subtlest sense, however—and this is close to the tertiary sense in which the word is applied to art and aesthetic experience—*rasa* comes to signify a state of heightened delight, in the sense of *ananda*, the kind of bliss that can be experienced only by the spirit. As later writers such as Vishwanatha, fourteenth century author of the *Sahitya Darpana*, a celebrated work on poetics, say: *rasa* is an experience akin to ultimate reality, "twin brother to the tasting of Brahma." In Vishwanatha, the very definition of poetry involves invoking the word *rasa*. His dictum is often quoted: "Poetry is a sentence the soul of which is *rasa*."

The theory of art that centers around the idea of *rasa* was enunciated for the first time, in the form that it has come down to us, by Bharata in the *Natyashastra*, that extraordinary work on the arts of the theater, which is generally placed close to the beginning of the Christian era. But its roots go back still farther, for even as he sets it forth in outline, Bharata acknowledges his debt to older masters. Bharata enunciates and applies the *rasa* theory to the arts of the stage, incorporating dance and music (*natya*), but, as Coomaraswamy says, the theory is "immediately applicable to art of all kinds," much of its terminology specifically employing the concept of color. The point of the present exhibition is to explore how it works in relationship to the visual arts, specifically sculpture and painting.

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So pervasive and widespread is the use of the term *rasa* in the context of the arts in India, so often is it evoked by critics and common viewers or readers, that it forms a central part of the vocabulary of art. A performance of dance or music or of a play often might be criticized as being devoid of *rasa* (*nirasa*), or praised for yielding *rasa* in great measure. The voice of a singer would be acclaimed for being charged with *rasa* (*rasili*), the eyes of the beloved would be described as filled with *rasa*, and so on. Whatever philosophers and theoreticians might have to say of the term and the many complexities that attend its proper understanding when applied to art, the simple appreciator of art knows his mind quite well and uses the term frequently, often with remarkable accuracy. Great and considered works on rhetoric might insist that the justification of art lies in its service of the fourfold purposes of life, its aims (*purusharthas*) as generally understood in India: right action (*dharma*), pleasure (*karma*), wealth (*artha*), and spiritual freedom (*moksha*). At the ordinary level, it is understood that art must result in an experience of *rasa*, must yield delight. Of the four ends of life, as Coomaraswamy says, "the first three represent the proximate and last the ultimate. The work of art is determined in the same way . . . proximately with regard to immediate use, and ultimately with regard to aesthetic experience." Referring to Vishwanatha, he maintains:

> . . . mere narration, bare utility, are not art, or are only art in a rudimentary sense. Nor has art as such a merely informative value confined to its explicit meaning: only the man of little wit can fail to recognize that art is by nature a well-spring of delight, whatever may have been the occasion of its appearance.

That *rasa* is what art is all about may not be specifically stated in so many words by everyone, but in a very real sense it is what a viewer is looking for in a work of art. I remember quite sharply an occasion when I took some keen doubt of mine, a small inquiry regarding the date or style of a painting, to that great connoisseur of the arts of India, the late Rai Krishna Dasa in Benaras. Rai Sahib, as he was almost universally called, heard my questions with his usual grace and patience, then leaned back on the comfortable round bolster on his simple divan and said softly: "These questions I will now leave to you eager historians of art. All that I want to do, at this stage of my life"—he was past seventy years of age then and in frail health—"is to taste *rasa*." Nobody knew more than Rai Sahib about the kinds of questions that I had taken to him at that time, but somehow he had moved on to, or back toward, what the real meaning or purpose of art was, in his eyes.

That in the context of the arts *rasa* is central, something toward which things move and around which they so often revolve, comes through even in Coomaraswamy's brilliant essay, "The Theory of Art in Asia." Bringing a refreshingly different but valid point of view to the average Western reader and critic of his days, Coomaraswamy elaborated upon many Eastern theories in his essay. He explored and attempted to bring within reach many ideas, ranging from the nature and meaning of representation in art as seen though Asian eyes, to the nature of art itself, discussing the issue of ideal types and the six canons of art developed in China and India. He speaks in this essay of symbolism and conventions, of decadence and intellectuality, as understood in the arts of a culture like India, emphasizing how an object of Indian art is a visual symbol, "ideal in the mathematical sense." He also distinguishes between originality and novelty on the one hand, and intensity or energy, on the other. Significantly, the discussion is crowned by, or at least moves in the end toward, the complex notion of *rasa* as forming a part of the "formal theory of art" in India. He seems to say that it is in the context of *rasa*, and with constant reference to it, that art seems to have been viewed in an earlier age in India.

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THE SCULPTURES and paintings that constitute the present show are meant to be seen against the background of an awareness of the way *rasa* works in and through works of art. In the performing arts of India, *rasa* is spoken of all too often as being part of the language of the dancer and the musician, and of the vocabulary of the critic. But in the visual arts, it is not mentioned with as much frequency or self-assurance. It may be useful therefore to begin with understanding the *rasa* experience—not easy to analyze—with reference to its various parts. This will have to be done through the work of writers on the arts of the theater or of poetry, for not much has been written on it with reference to the visual arts. But understanding it in its outline, even if in terms of the world of drama or poetry, would present no serious difficulty. Although the subject bristles with problems, the broad outlines—and these alone interest us here—are reasonably clear.

An impressive amount of literature has been written in India on rhetoric in which ideas on *rasa* figure most prominently. A lively debate seems to have gone on for nearly fifteen hundred years with regard to the true nature of *rasa*: some things are clear, but others remain obscure or elusive. For any understanding of *rasa*, however, a prerequisite is to gain familiarity with some basic terms. The terms had to be expounded at some length by Bharata and some later writers, for the whole understanding of the ideas contained in this theory of art would depend on a precise comprehension of these forms. It needs to be remembered that many of them are not employed in common parlance, certainly not as commonly or easily as *rasa* is, and some writers have been quick to point out that some of these terms were coined or bent toward specific usage by Bharata, so that they are not easily confused with ordinarily employed terms and are seen as possessing special meanings. To this generally difficult situation, we have to add the difficulty of translating them from Sanskrit into Western languages. The difficulty is compounded because different translators of Sanskrit texts in which these terms occur have used different English equivalents for Sanskrit originals. One cannot speak of any standard renderings of these terms: it would serve the interests of clarity, therefore, if the Sanskrit originals are used with some frequency along with their translations.

As we have observed, the word *rasa* is variously rendered. At one point, Coomaraswamy uses for it the term "ideal beauty." While "tincture" or "essence" are not employed in the context of aesthetic experience, the word commonly favored is "flavor." Manmohan Ghosh, in his translation of the text of Bharata's *Natyashastra*, preferred the term "sentiment"; other writers have used the word "relish" for *rasa*. Aesthetic experience is described as the "tasting of flavor" (*rasasvadana*); the taster, in other words the viewer or reader, more specifically a scholar or connoisseur, is referred to as a *rasika*. A work of art possessing *rasa* is often described as being *rasavat*, or *rasavant*. Other terms, a little more difficult to understand because they are used in a very special sense, are: *bhava* (rendered as mood or emotional state), *vibhavas* (determinants), *anubhavas* (consequents), and *vyabhicharibhavas* (complementary emotional states). A *sthayibhava* is an enduring or durable emotional state; *sattvika bhavas* are involuntary bodily responses in states of emotion. Each of these terms needs to be clearly understood, but to this we can return later.

Some idea of the controversies that obtain in the domain of the *rasa* theory can be gained from the fact that there is no clear agreement even about how many *rasas* there are. Bharata speaks of eight sentiments (to which a widely accepted ninth has been added by later writers): Shringara (the erotic), Hasya (the comic), Karuna (the pathetic), Raudra (the furious), Vira (the heroic), Bhayanaka (the terrible), Bibhatsa (the odious), and Adbhuta (the marvelous). The ninth *rasa* spoken of is Shanta (the quiescent; Appendix A). These are separately listed because even though *rasa* is defined as one and undivided it is one or the other of these nine *rasas* through which an aesthetic experience takes place, in the language

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employed by Bharata and later rhetoricians. Because out of these nine, one sentiment or flavor dominates, a work of art propels a spectator toward, or becomes the occasion for, a *rasa* experience.

Aesthetic experience as defined in this context is the act of tasting a *rasa*, "of immersing oneself in it to the exclusion of all else." In essence, Bharata seems to say, with reference to theatrical performance, the focus of his work, "*rasa* is born from the union of the play with the performance of the actors." A great deal of later discussion verges on the interpretation of a terse statement of Bharata's, a *sutra* or aphorism, which reads: "*Rasa* is born out of the union of the determinants (*vibhavas*), the consequents (*anubhavas*) and the complementary emotional states (*vyabhicharibhavas*)." In explanation, Bharata says rather little—later writers were to debate the point with heat and acrimony—but it is appropriate that his exact words be taken in first. After making this brief pronouncement, he asks a rhetorical question: "Is there any instance [parallel to it]?" and proceeds to answer:

> [Yes], it is said that as taste [*rasa*] results from a combination of various spices, vegetables and other articles, and as six tastes are produced by articles, such as raw sugar or spices or vegetables, so the durable emotional states [*sthayibhava*], when they come together with various other psychological states, attain the quality of a sentiment [i.e. become sentiment]. Now one inquires, "What is the meaning of the word *rasa*?" It is said in reply [that *rasa* is so called] because it is capable of being tasted. How is *rasa* tasted? [In reply] it is said that just as well-disposed persons while eating food cooked with many kinds of spices enjoy its taste, and attain pleasure and satisfaction, so the cultured people taste the durable emotional states while they see them represented by an expression of the various emotional states with words, gestures, and derive pleasure and satisfaction. Just as a connoisseur of cooked food [*bhakta*] while eating food which has been prepared from various spices and other articles tastes it, so the learned people taste in their heart [*manas*] the durable emotional states [such as love, sorrow etc.] when they are represented by an expression of the emotional states with gestures. Hence, these durable emotional states in a drama are called sentiments.

Much else follows and several issues arise, but it might be useful first to try to gain a rudimentary understanding of how all this operates. If *rasa* is born of or arises from a combination of determinants, consequents, and complementary emotional states, we begin with these. Determinants (*vibhavas*) are essentially "the physical stimulants to aesthetic reproduction, particularly the theme and its parts, the indications of time and place and other apparatus of representation—the whole *factible*." Of these, too, two different categories are spoken of: *alambana vibhavas* and *uddipana vibhavas* meaning, respectively, the substantial determinants and the excitant determinants. Taking help from later writers, and taking the example of a specific *rasa* like Shringara, the erotic, its determinants would be of two kinds. The substantial determinants would be a lover and beloved, hero or heroine, or in Sanskrit, a *nayaka* and *nayika*. Without these, the erotic sentiment or mood of love would be difficult to imagine. The excitants would be, among other things, the moon, sandalwood ointment and other unguents, the humming of bees, attractive clothing and jewelry, an empty house or a secluded grove in a garden appropriate as a trysting place. Consequents (*anubhavas*) are "the specific and conventional means of registering emotional states, in particular gestures and glances etc.," something to which the *Natyashastra* pays such wonderfully elaborate attention. Continuing with Shringara, in this case the appropriate consequents (*anubhavas*) could be raising of the eyebrows, sidelong glances, embracing, kissing, holding hands. The range of gestures and movements appropriate to the theme is remarkably rich in both dance and drama, and the performer can draw upon his whole repertoire.

Then there are the complementary (or transitory) emotional states (*vyabhicharibhavas*), of which Bharata lists as many as thirty-three (see Appendix B). These range from agitation, depression, weariness, distraction, and stupor to fright, shame, joy, envy, anxiety, and indecision. They are referred to as

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complementary or transitory because while they arise in the course, say, of a play, and actors interpreting characters go through them, they do not last long and serve eventually only to feed into the dominant mood of a performance. They complement the principal mood or emotional state and do not in themselves leave a lasting impression. Finally, there are listed eight involuntary bodily responses (*sattvika bhavas*) in states of emotions, including perspiration, paralysis, trembling, fainting, change of voice, change of color, and horripilation.

Continuing with Shringara, it is stated that any complementary emotional state could be brought into a work except cruelty, death, indolence, or disgust, because they are opposed to the rise of the principal sentiment, the erotic. In the course of a performance in which the appropriate determinants and consequents and complementary emotional states have been selected, developed, and used, the viewer's heart is constantly and subtly being worked on by these properties, conditions, or representations of states. A "churning of the heart" takes place, at the end of which a dominant emotional state emerges, a *bhava* that is called *sthayi*, or durable. Any one of the nine *bhavas* of this durable kind could come floating to the surface of the mind of the viewer. These nine emotional states are *rati* (love), *hasa* (mirth, playfulness), *shoka* (sorrow), *krodha* (anger), *utsaha* (energy), *bhaya* (fear), *jugupsa* (disgust), *vismaya* (astonishment) and *shama* (equanimity). It would be seen that these durable emotional states (*sthayi-bhavas*) correspond to the nine *rasas* or sentiments listed earlier. Thus, the emotional state of love has its correspondence in the erotic sentiment, that of laughter or mirth its correspondence in the comic sentiment, and so on (see Appendix C).

At this point an elusive, inscrutable element is introduced in the *rasa* theory. It is stated that when, as a result of this churning of the heart, this mixing of the elements, a durable emotional state has emerged, this very state transmutes itself into a *rasa* in a competent person. If the circumstances have been right, if the performance is of the proper order, and if the viewer is cultured and sensitive enough (a *rasika*) a spark would leap from the performance to the viewer, resulting in an experience that would suffuse the entire being of the *rasika*. The experience might possess the suddenness of a flash of lightning, leaving the viewer unprepared for the moment and unaware of the swiftness with which it comes, deeply moved by it. This is the moment when, as a later writer put it, "magical flowers would blossom" in his awareness: *rasa* would be tasted. The experience is genuine and definable, but, it is stated, there are so many variables in the situation that it cannot be predicted or even worked toward. The same viewer may have a *rasa* experience of one level at one time from a performance, and not have it at another; the intensity of one viewer's experience may be different from another's. Many factors intervene, but this at least seems to be the essence of the *rasa* experience.

Aesthetic experience (*rasasvadana*) has been defined by different writers, each in his own terms and according to his own understanding. Bharata's chapter on *rasa* has been commented and elaborated upon by generations of scholars and theoreticians, the most important among them being Abhinavagupta, that great Kashmiri scholar of the eleventh century. After Bharata, an authoritative definition comes from Vishwanatha, author of the celebrated *Sahitya Darpana* (Mirror of Composition). Coomaraswamy regards Vishwanatha's passage defining the nature of aesthetic experience "of such authority and value as to demand translation *in extenso*":

> Flavor [*rasa*] is tasted [*asvadyate*] by men having an innate knowledge of absolute values [*kaishchit-pramatribhih*] in exaltation of the pure consciousness [*sattvodrekat*] as self-luminous [*svaprakashah*] in the mode at once of ecstasy and intellect [*anandacinmayah*], void of contact with things knowable [*vedyantarasparshashunyah*], twin brother to the tasting of Brahma [*brahmasvadasahodarah*], whereof the life is a superworldly lightning flash [*lokottaracamatkarapranah*], an intrinsic aspect [*svakaravat-*

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> *svarupavat*] in indivisibility [*abhinnatve*]. . . . Pure aesthetic experience is theirs in whom the knowledge of ideal beauty is innate; it is known intuitively in intellectual ecstasy without accompaniment of ideation, at the highest level of conscious being; born of one mother with the vision of God, its life is as it were a flash of blinding light of transmundane origin, impossible to analyze, and yet in the image of our very being.

Appropriately, Coomaraswamy reminds us that there are two senses in which the word *rasa* is commonly used: first, "relatively, in the plural with reference to the various, usually eight or nine, emotional conditions which may constitute the burden of a given work," and second, "absolutely, in the singular, with reference to the interior act of tasting flavor unparticularized. In the latter sense, the idea of an aesthetic beauty to be tasted, and knowable only in the activity of tasting, is to be clearly distinguished from the relative beauties or loveliness of the separate parts of the work or of the work itself considered merely as a surface."

Aesthetic experience, it has been stated, is "just as a flower born of magic" which has "as its essence, solely the present, it is co-related neither with what came before nor with what comes after." Between the spectator and the experience of *rasa* lie many obstacles, much the same way in which obstacles lie between a meditator and his realization of that supreme bliss that comes from perfect knowledge. These need to be removed, not the easiest of tasks. In fact, long discussions center around this question of the nature of obstacles, and the possibilities of their removal in different kinds and categories of viewers. But once removed, the dust wiped clean from the mirror of the heart, what is experienced is that sense of exalted delight "different from the forms of bliss of practical life, and just because it is devoid of obstacles, it is called Tasting, Delibation, Lysis, Perception, Rest, in the nature of the knowing subject." Aesthetic experience is thus a transformation "not merely of feeling, but equally of understanding," "a condensed understanding in the mode of ecstasy." As Gnoli, paraphrasing Abhinavagupta, puts it:

> The so-called supreme bliss, the lysis, the wonder is . . . nothing but a tasting, that is, a cognitation in all its compact density, of our own liberty. This liberty is *realissima* [that is to say, not metaphorical] and inseparable from the very nature of consciousness. We must not, however, forget that in the tasting of a juice or sweet flavor, etc., there is, between this bliss and us, the separating screen, so to say, of the exterior reality. In poetry, in drama, and so on, this screen is actually missing, but it remains in a latent state. Also in these forms of limited bliss, however, those people whose hearts are carefully devoted to canceling the part which performs the functions of a screen succeed in reaching the supreme bliss.

As would be noticed, there is a marked emphasis in this entire enunciation on the spectator. The words used to denote him are carefully chosen, because the clear assumption behind this entire theory of art is that it is not given to everyone to attain that state, that lightning flash of understanding and delight which is the *rasa* experience. We have to remind ourselves once again that the theory is worked out in the context of drama, and that only the spectator who is a *rasika* will have this experience. For it is he who knows what *rasa* is, and whose mind is prepared to receive the experience. It is clear through several assertions in the *Natyashastra*, and by later writers, that the experience of *rasa* depends a great deal on the energy (*utsaha*) that the spectator brings with him to the experience of a work of art. As is stated, it is his own energy "that is the cause of tasting, just as when children play with clay elephants." The durable emotional state that is subtly brought into being by or through a work of art is one thing: its transmutation into a *rasa* is dependent upon the energy, the inner ability, the singleness of heart of the *rasika*. The faculty of imagination and wonder is greatly emphasized.

It is asserted by several authorities that the *rasa* experience belongs not to the poet or to the actor but exclusively to the viewer. The whole question of where *rasa* lies has been the subject of much debate. Abhinavagupta examines various ideas on the subject and states quite emphatically:

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> *Rasa* does not lie in the actor. But where then? You have all forgotten and I remind you again [of what I have already said]. Indeed I have said that *rasa* is not limited by any difference of space, times, and knowing subjects. Your doubt is then devoid of sense. But what is the actor? The actor, I say, is the means of the tasting, and hence he is called by the name "vessel." The taste of wine, indeed, does not stay in the vessel, which is only a means necessary to the tasting of it. The actor then is necessary and useful only in the beginning.

To the natural question whether the actor or the artist also experiences *rasa,* several writers including Vishwanatha maintain that he "may obtain aesthetic experience from the spectacle of his own performance." The actor is understood quite naturally not to be unmoved by "the passions he depicts." Likewise the musician, the dancer, the maker of an image would be involved in the emotion that he brings to his performance or work, but the experiencing of emotion before or during the act of making or performing, it is stated, is of an order different from the *rasa* experience, which has that illuminating, suffusing character, is that lightning flash of delight, and can be experienced by the maker or the performer only when and if he puts himself in the position of a viewer of himself and his work.

There is more cerebration about the *rasa* experience. Is it in the nature of a revelation, an unveiling, of entering a state of manifestness? Or, does it imply the coming into being of a state that did not exist before and is therefore something new and fresh? According to Vishwanatha, when it is said that *rasa* is something brought out into manifestness, what is meant is that it is made manifest "in a different character to which it is changed." Examples from the area of food and tasting—appropriate to the whole question of *asvadana*—illustrate this. It is stated thus that milk and curd are of the same substance, curd being milk presented under a change of character; it is not something previously completed and previously so extant; it is certainly not something only revealed. A change is involved between what one sees and what one experiences, the perception, the act of gustation, identifying the nature of the change. It is along these lines that much of the discussion proceeds, but for our purposes it is not necessary to go at any length into these discussions, except to remind ourselves of an oft-cited aphorism that *"bhava,* the durable emotional state, is the flower, and *rasa* is the fruit thereof." The second is evidently not possible to think of without the first, but this does not mean that the first will, in all cases, result in the second. Flower and fruit are clearly related, being parts of the same plant, but they are different in character and, of course, each flower does not necessarily yield or lead to fruit.

A predictable measure of attention in these discussions is claimed by the question: how does aesthetic experience differ from experience of the kinds of emotions which are part of our real, everyday life? The issue is brought to a head through a relatively simple example. If, as is maintained, the *rasa* experience is one of delight, how is it, it might well be asked, that "things that are painful in reality become, in art, the sources of pleasure?" The states of sorrow, fear, or disgust obviously do not yield pleasure in real life, and yet one speaks of them as leading to an aesthetic experience. As Vishwanatha puts it: "No one possessed of understanding engages—knowingly, and without some ulterior view—in paining himself; and yet we see that everyone enters with engrossing interest into the 'Pathetic' [sentiment]. . . ." He answers himself by stating that the *rasa* experience is not experience at an everyday, mundane level. The nature of *rasa* experience is transcendental, hyperphysical, literally *lokottara*, beyond ordinary experience. If this were not so, who would read the *Ramayana*, that great epic, the leading sentiment of which is Karuna, the pathetic? As it is, we hold it as being one of the most heart-delighting compositions of Indian literature. The distancing from the mundane experience of emotions made possible by a fine work or performance is what makes the difference.

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The notion here is different from catharsis. The heart is not lightened through a performance; the *rasa* that it yields is a kind of "delight of the reason," as Coomaraswamy puts it, "an ecstasy in itself inscrutable." Another illuminating instance is that of the *Mahabharata*, that other great epic, in which the unutterably sad adventures of a just and truthful king, Harishchandra, are told at great length, involving the grief of deprivation and tear-shedding. To this it is said that the audience sheds tears not because of the pain that it actually experiences, but because through witnessing the performance of Harishchandra's tale, the heart is melted. This melting of the heart is a matter of moment, and it is from this that further discussion proceeds about why everyone cannot "receive" from a work of art. It is here that the role of imagination, of "cultivated intellectual sensibility," is emphasized. This imagination, this capacity for "conceiving whatever passion is intended to be depicted," is what characterizes a *rasika*.

Another point made is that *rasa* is, essentially, considered unique, indivisible. Its division into eight or nine varieties possesses only limited value and is adopted for the sake of convenience. Were it not so, its universality would come into doubt. The various divisions that we characterize as sentiments are like "rays of different colors, that we perceive when light is passed through a prism." Another image often employed by writers is of the various *rasas* being like different-colored precious stones all strung on the same necklace. *Rasa* is one, we are told; it is only approached or colored differently.

Aesthetic experience is seen, in the final analysis, as

> an inscrutable and uncaused spiritual activity, that is virtually ever present and potentially realizable, but not possible to be realized unless and until all effective and mental barriers have been resolved, all knots of the heart undone. . . .

Closely related to *rasa* is the idea of *dhvani*, the reverberation of meaning arising by suggestion. *Dhvani* is referred to as the very soul of poetry. Ordinarily one thinks of a word or other symbol as possessing only two powers, those of denotation (*abhidha*) and connotation (*lakshana*). But Indian thinkers of the brilliant School of Manifestation assume for a word or a symbol "a third power, that of suggestion, the matter suggested, which we should call the real content of the work, being *dhvani*." Here reference is made to the literal, allegorical, and anagogic significance of words and symbols: "*Dhvani*, as overtone of meaning, is thus the immediate vehicle of a single *rasa* and means to aesthetic experience." The heart of the cultivated viewer, the *rasika*, is like "dry wood charged by latent fire": it only needs to be kindled, and the kindling often takes place through a work of art that produces suggestions, "reverberations of meaning."

Coomaraswamy concludes his lucid if relatively brief discussion of the formal Indian theory of art by pointing out that both *rasa* and *dhvani* are essentially metaphysical and vedantic in method and conclusion. The fully evolved Indian theory of beauty, which may have come into being only by the tenth or eleventh century, with all the commentaries on the *Natyashastra* and interpretations added by later writers, evidently drew a great deal upon the philosophical thought of India in which the realization of God was gone into with such extraordinary subtlety and at such length. It is not without reason that writers constantly compare the delight that constitutes the *rasa* experience and is its essence, and the pure bliss experienced by the meditator when he perceives the ultimate reality. In Coomaraswamy's words:

> . . . the conception of the work of art as determined outwardly to use and inwardly to a delight of the reason; the view of its operation as not intelligibly causal, but by way of a destruction of the mental and affective barriers behind which the natural manifestation of the spirit is concealed; the necessity that the soul should be already prepared for this emancipation by an inborn or acquired sensibility; the requirement of self-identification with the ultimate theme, on the part of both artist and spectator, as prerequisite to visualization in the first instance and reproduction in the second; finally, the conception of ideal

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> beauty as unconditioned by natural affection, indivisible, supersensual and indistinguishable from the gnosis of God—all these characteristics of the theory demonstrate its logical connection with the predominant trends of Indian thought, and its natural place in the whole body of Indian philosophy.

Clearly in India, as elsewhere, modes of seeing were intimately tied to modes of thought.

Whether the Indian theory is *sui generis* in origins or formulation is a matter of some interest. Coomaraswamy did not see it as being far removed from other points of view in the east (and in the west, up to a point of time), and emphasized only that it differed essentially "from the modern nonintellectual interpretations of art as sensation." In his view "merely because of the specific idiomatic and mythical form in which it finds expression, it need not be thought of as otherwise than universal." He held that it does not differ, at least in its essentials, from "what is implicit in the Far Eastern view of art, or on the other hand from the scholastic Christian point of view, or what is asserted in the aphorisms of Blake." Other writers do see it as being so strongly rooted in Indian ideas that it is difficult to conceive of it as belonging, even in its essentials, to another culture. In any event its flavor is so Indian, and its presence in the Indian modes of seeing and thinking so pervasive, that one would do well to think of it as one of the keys to the code that is Indian culture.

Some relatively lesser matters concerning the theory of *rasa* may be mentioned in passing. In the Indian tradition, concepts are often associated with presiding deities and are assigned colors. The *rasas*, too, have designated colors. Thus: Shringara = *shyama* (bluish-black); Hasya = white; Karuna = dove-colored; Raudra = red; Vira = yellow; Bhayanaka = black; Bibhatsa = blue; Adbhuta = gold; Shanta = the color of jasmine and the moon. Their respective deities are Vishnu, Shiva, Yama, Rudra, Indra, Kala, Mahakala, a gandharva, and Narayana (see Appendix C).

Some writers go into the question of which *rasas* are in harmony with each other, and which are opposed or contrary. Jagannatha in his *Rasagangadhara* gives us a list. In his view, Shringara goes with Vira and Adbhuta; likewise Vira goes with Shringara, Raudra, and Adbhuta. But Shringara and Bibhatsa, Shringara and Karuna, and Shringara and Shanta "stand in opposition." Vira and Bhayanaka, and Shanta and Raudra are also opposed to each other. The suggestion is that when in a work one *rasa* is maturing, the experience of *rasa* is broken, so to speak, if its contrary intervenes.

Many authors speak of the faults (*doshas*) that may creep into the process of creating certain moods (*bhavas*) and thus affect their corresponding *rasas*. Taking the example of erotic sentiment based on the durable emotional state of love (*rati*), it is maintained that *bhava* would be improper and/or incomplete if love were made to reside in a secondary hero; if it is directed toward the wife of a sage or teacher; if many heroes are taken as its object; if it does not exist in both the man and the woman; if it exists in a rival hero; or else in low persons, or lower animals. Faults are pointed out, following the practice of emphasizing those virtues and faults in poetical compositions which took up so much of the energy and attention of writers on the subject. There are elaborate discussions on whether love for God, the king, or one's own son can lead to the experience of *rasas* under the category of Shringara, with the emphatic conclusion that this kind of love does not fall properly under the erotic sentiment. Cases of incomplete or imperfect aesthetic experience are cited, and several highly interesting terms are coined and discussed to indicate that imperfect *bhavas* or *rasas* do exist. Again and again it is emphasized that harshness, uselessness, superfluity, affect the soul of art adversely. Essentially, "what does not help or what is not needed for understanding the principal idea" is understood as a fault and needs to be avoided.

THE ABOVE outline of the *rasa* theory as part of the formal theory of art in Indian thought takes as its context not the arts of sculpture or painting, but the performing or literary arts. There is reason behind

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this, for the first enunciation, in a considered form of the "doctrine," is in a text that concerns *natya*, the arts of the stage; the emphasis of most of the later writers who discuss *rasa* remained on poetry. Ideas on *rasa* were scarcely ever applied in detail to sculpture and painting, and certainly no treatise was devoted to the connection. Even examples from sculpture or painting do not seem to have been cited by any of the principal writers and thinkers on the arts in general.

This should not be understood to mean that the ideas on *rasa* do not apply to sculpture and painting. Clearly they do so by implication, and when Coomaraswamy discusses *rasa* he speaks appropriately and firmly of the applicability of this theory to the visual arts as much as to performing or literary arts. That ideas on *rasa* are never far from the thoughts of persons involved in making or seeing images becomes clear whenever any reactions to art are cited in literary works. Praise is accorded to a painting being seen by a character in a poem or play in terms of whether or not it yields an experience of delight, and details such as the *vibhavas* and *anubhavas* are noted. It remains clear that the enjoyment of a work of sculpture or painting is thought of or described in terms familiar from the complex of ideas that center on *rasa*. At the same time, it must be recalled that a major work on painting and sculpture, one of the principal *shilpa* texts, the *Vishnudharmottaram*, generally dated between the fifth and the seventh centuries A.D. (later than Bharata but considerably earlier than many others whom we have noted, Abhinavagupta or Vishwanatha, for example) speaks of *rasa* at some length in Part III, Chapter 43. No examples to illustrate the various *rasas* are cited from major works of sculpture or painting—this is not even to be expected, for the principal focus of the work is on "making" in technical terms—but the mere fact that in this highly regarded text, space is taken to expand upon *rasa* is significant. The chapter dealing with *rasa* here opens with the words: "The sentiments represented in painting are said to be nine. . . ." What follows is a brief description of the *rasas*, and a discussion of what themes fall under them generally, and even a passage presenting which *rasas* are appropriate for different settings. Thus, it is stated that "pictures to embellish homes should belong to *shringara*, *hasya* and *shanta rasas* alone," and so on. What is suggested directly or by implication, alike to the maker of images and to the person who aims at understanding the ideas underlying the making of works of art, is that *rasa* is as much relevant to these arts as it is to literature and performances. How *rasa* arises is not discussed, but it must have been taken for granted that this is known to the learned.

Yet there are inherent difficulties in demonstrating (not applying) how the *rasa* theory works in the context of sculpture and painting. The intention behind the making of images which can be categorized as "icons" would not be the same as that which lies behind other kinds. Thus, an image to be installed as an object of worship in a sanctum would clearly be approached by the sculptor differently from an image carved or placed on the outer wall of a shrine. The icon, in this rather limited sense, would be the visual equivalent of a *mantra* or a *dhyana*, and would not necessarily be seen as leading to the same kind of experience as does a poetic composition intended to delight. It is easy to concede that this may not always be so, even in the case of icons: thus an image of the Buddha, withdrawn and expressive of the idea of perfect balance, equipoise, could be easily seen as belonging to or falling under quiescence; likewise an image of a *yogini*, or the Devi in one of her many fierce forms, can be easily seen as having been conceived in such a way that it comes close to engendering feelings of fear in the viewer. But in general, icons remain one matter, and the wide range of Indian art another.

The real difficulty in seeing the connection between works of sculpture and painting and the ideas of *rasa* is of a different order. As we see them now, for the most part out of context, on display in museums or private collections, we cannot fully appreciate the impact that these works must have made on viewers

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of earlier generations, or the ideas that lay behind their making, or their being placed in specific situations. It is one thing to see a sculptured panel in its rightful place on the wall of, say, a standing temple; but quite another to see it, however splendid and elegantly presented, in isolation in a gallery. Originally, each panel must have been visualized in relationship to the monument to which it belonged, as well as conceived as a part of a total scheme and integrally related to other panels of the same monument. It would be unrealistic to expect that such a piece of sculpture, remote from its cultural or programmatic context, would yield the kind of experience it must have yielded when seen in its proper setting in a binding relationship to other sculptural elements of its series. Unfortunately, very few studies document the sculptural programs of major monuments such as standing temples or *stupas*. Yet, few works of sculpture, barring icons made for the specific purpose of worship at home or installation in a shrine, can have been made singly.

A similar difficulty applies to painting. While here, too, some works must have been produced as icons, or in isolation, it is reasonably certain that most paintings we see today as single folios were originally conceived as elements in a series. This condition is easily demonstrable, for when paintings occur in an illustrated manuscript or belong to a set of painted folios such as the *Gita Govinda,* the *Ramayana,* the *Bhagavata Purana,* or the *Rasamanjari,* their connection is obvious. Even seen in isolation (most sets have been scattered and even illustrated manuscripts taken apart and distributed or sold), we can visualize the connection among folios that once belonged together, whether of a narrative or thematic nature. Even ancestral portraits were frequently made in series: an extraordinary group was produced in the eighteenth century, and a remarkable range of portraits of princes and commoners was painted for Sansar Chand of Kangra in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus, the fragmented experience they now offer to present-day viewers can only approximate what they must have yielded to viewers of the age to which they first belonged.

Despite all this, the exercise of seeing works of Indian art in the awareness of *rasa*, if not in its exact context, has some merit. At times there may be some advantage in seeing works in isolation, for then we focus upon them more sharply. This apart, it should be possible to gain at least some idea of the effect of images and sculptures in their original contexts and at an earlier time, even when we see them today only in small groups or in specially assembled exhibitions such as the present one. The purpose of viewing in the awareness of *rasa* is to acquaint ourselves with the character of Indian art.

What is presented is not a random selection of significant works of art. No history of Indian art can be reconstructed through these works, no chronology or understanding of the complex world of Indian styles can come within reach, nor is it attempted. All that these works may do is to help the viewer comprehend this part in operation, to assist in learning what it is all about. But the intention of this assembly is not didactic; rather, the attempt is to offer suggestions, especially to Western viewers who are less likely to be familiar with the ways in which these objects and paintings functioned in Indian art in their original contexts.

It is possible, but not necessary, to take each work of art and forcefully point out how its various elements work together in the direction leading toward a *rasa* experience. One is aware that there would be obstacles to taking in what these works of art contain, hindrances of the kinds the texts speak of, such as cluttered minds and imprecise notions, as well as others belonging to the artificial situation in which the objects can only be seen today. Because associations differ and reverberations of meanings cannot be caught in a different cultural context with the same richness, some viewers, both in India and elsewhere, would be inclined to see specific works as possibly relating to a different *rasa* than the one with which

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they are here associated. Such disparities or preferences are not unexpected, since, as the texts say, we all bring our associations, "impressions from an earlier existence," and our own energies to works of art.

We hope this exhibition will alert viewers to look in Indian works for things which earlier may have seemed to be of peripheral interest, even extraneous to the works, and thus to become sensitive to details that did not initially impinge upon their awareness. The subsidiary or supporting elements, all those wonderfully elegant and varied stances and gestures, the clouds and lightning in the sky, the rendering of foliage, the inclinations of the head, the direction of glances, all require a quick eye and an eager mind. Even these details have meaning, for they imperceptibly feed the mood, the durable emotional state, that the painter or the sculptor must frequently have had in mind.

It would be a vain labor to try to apply the *rasa* theory in all its complex details to each work of art. Nor would it be possible to point out, in each sculpture and painting, which elements constitute the determinants, consequents, or the complementary emotional states to the letter of the theory. What is of concern is the spirit, and it is hoped that it will come within the viewer's reach. It is especially relevant to point out here that the distribution and application of colors in these paintings need not be examined with reference to the concept of each *rasa* having its given color. That part of the *rasa* theory seems to have followed only a general iconographical concept (like the notion that each *rasa* has a presiding deity) and is not to be seen, perhaps was never intended to be seen, as applying to colors in painting or on polychrome sculptures. The kind of symbolism of color, or the language of color associations, as in the Kathakali dance-drama of Kerala, does not seem to have developed in this context. The paintings are undoubtedly iconographically correct—thus, Krishna and Vishnu are blue or bluish-black; the garments that Krishna wears or the objects that he carries accord with formulas—but neither iconography nor iconology help in understanding the way that colors work in Indian painting, for the most part.

The works in this exhibition are objects of integrity, born of a certain vision, and it is fair to assume that they moved generations of viewers in India. We may not be moved by them in the same manner or in the same degree, but as long as they produce in some measure that melting of the heart of which texts speak, we can be satisfied that we have approached their spirit. Yet it is well to remember that we can take from these works only according to our own energies, our *utsaha*. As Coomaraswamy said: "He who would bring back the wealth of the Indies, must take the wealth of the Indies with him."

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SHRINGARA: THE EROTIC SENTIMENT

शृंगाररस

OF ALL THE *rasas*, Shringara receives the most detailed and enthusiastic treatment by early rhetoricians and later writers on poetics. It is referred to as the king of the sentiments (*rasaraja*), as the lord of all sentiments (*rasapati*); writers vie in praising it. Bharata himself says that "whatever is sacred, pure, placid, and worth seeing" can be compared to Shringara; Rudrata sees no other *rasa* "capable of producing that bliss of pleasure which the Shringara *rasa* does"; for Anandavardhana, Shringara is "the sweetest and the most exhilarating" of all the *rasas*. The word itself has been variously interpreted, and a range of etymologies suggested for it, the most popular being that given by Bhoja who says that Shringara is that through which a *shringa* or peak is reached, thinking evidently of a peak or climax of delight.

The evidence of rhetorical literature aside, Shringara has high visibility in the arts. There are distinguished dramatic works in which Shringara forms the subject; in poetic literature, certainly from the seventh century onward, a wonderful body of work exists with Shringara as its dominant theme. The kind of love treated may be divine or human, but the passion seldom falters. In the visual arts, once again, Shringara seems to dominate, certainly in post-Gupta and medieval sculpture, and later, in the high periods of Indian miniature painting. Great monuments, such as those at Konarak and Khajuraho, come to mind with mention of eroticism in the arts of India, but it is not only erotic art that one thinks of in the context of Shringara: it is the sentiment in all its subtlety of aspects, its infinitely variegated forms, that figures so prominently in the arts. The mood, the flavor, of love can be depicted and communicated as movingly in a sensitively rendered single figure as in the most passionate renderings of sexual encounters. The effect turns upon how the artist interprets and evokes the mood.

The enduring emotional state (*sthayibhava*) from which Shringara arises is love (*rati*). Bharata envisages the birth or emergence of love, arising from the determinant (*vibhava*) as essentially a person or persons imbued with the thought of love. The determinants could be things like "the pleasures of the season, the enjoyment of garlands, unguents, ornaments, [the company] of beloved persons, objects [of senses], splendid mansions, going to a garden and enjoying [oneself] there, seeing [the beloved], hearing [his or her words], playing and dallying." This list is illustrative, not exhaustive, and in the works that are here suggested as falling in this category, one can see the range of excitants adapted from the context of a theatrical production and considerably expanded by the sculptor or painter.

The determinants are followed by consequents (*anubhavas*). Referring to their rendering on the stage, Bharata includes such things as "clever movements of eyes, eyebrows, glances, soft and delicate movement of limbs, and sweet words and similar other things." The visual artist, being denied movements of dance, drama, or literature, develops a different vocabulary: he alters somewhat the emphasis on parts of the body, disposes limbs in a stylized but suggestive fashion, uses sharply etched gestures, devises different formulas for eyes and eyebrows, and so on.

The rhetoricians say that Shringara is preeminent as a *rasa* because it is the only one with which all the complementary emotional states, barring fear, indolence, cruelty, and disgust, can be connected, and with which all the enduring emotional states (*sthayibhavas*) except that of disgust can be brought into harmony.

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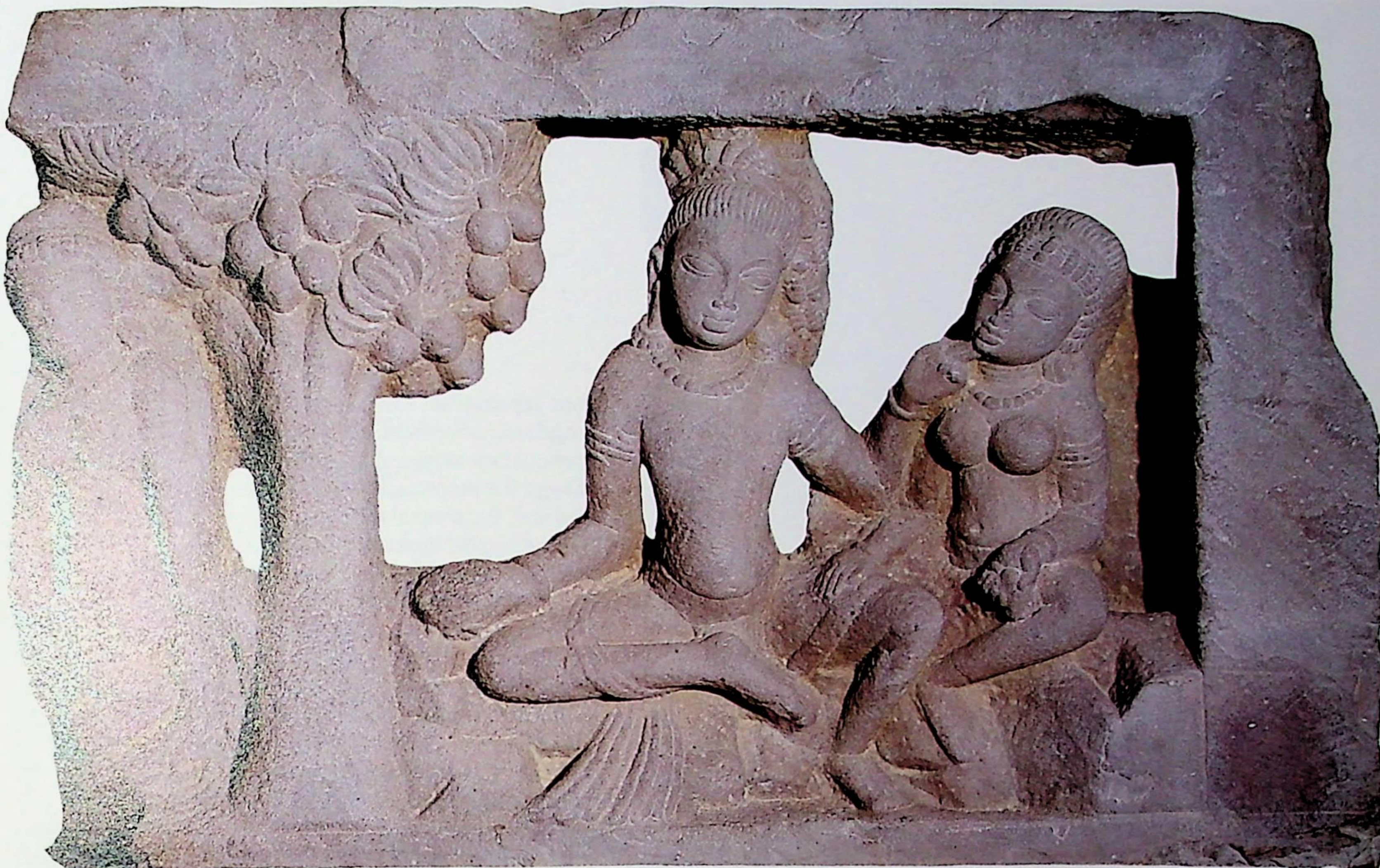
For illustrating the flavor or *rasa* of Shringara, a verse is often cited in the context of poetic literature:

> Perceiving that the house was empty, having arisen very gently from her couch, and having for a long time gazed upon the face of her husband counterfeiting sleep, having confidently kissed him; then, seeing his cheek quiver, the girl, with face downcast through modesty, was long kissed by her laughing lover.

Many things come together in the illustration. The husband and the shy girl are the two determinants, as is the empty house which serves as an excitant; kissing is the consequent; the bashfulness and mirth are accessories or complementary emotional states; and the condition of love resulting from all these "assumes the nature of what we call the erotic sentiment."

Shringara, as many texts on erotics establish, is of two kinds: love in union and love in separation (*sambhoga* and *vipralambha*), respectively. Elaborate texts such as Bhanudatta's *Rasamanjari* go into exquisite, wonderful detail while exploring the intricate nuances of the two kinds of love, using classifications and subclassifications in their highly structured analysis of this most passionate of all sentiments. The sculptor and the painter also seem to be only too well aware of the literature on the subject and of the complexities into which the theme can lead. There is great delight, then, in viewing the body of work on Shringara in the arts, if done in an unhurried manner and with the aim to understand and enjoy the subtlest aspects of human love. The finest examples exist in Rajput painting, of which Ananda Coomaraswamy wrote: "What Chinese art achieved for landscape is here accomplished for human love. Here, if never and nowhere else in the world, the Western Gates are opened wide."

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1

DIVINE LOVERS SEATED UNDER A TREE
Sandstone
5th–6th century; from Nachna Kuthara, Madhya Pradesh
60 x 120 cm
Tulsi Sangrahalaya, Ramban, No. 79

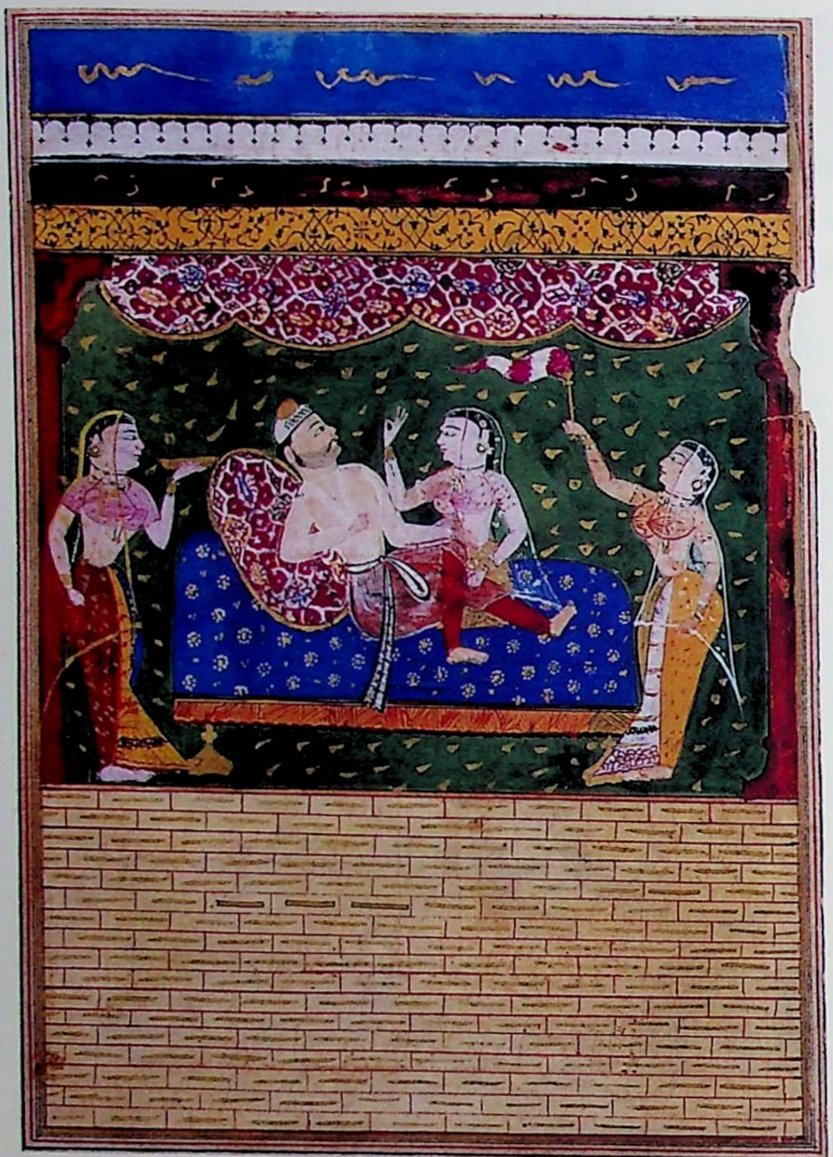
From Nachna, one of the more important centers of art during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods in Middle India, comes this small, unpretentious piece. A relaxed youthful couple sits intimately on an uneven, cuboid surface which indicates a mountainous setting. Their gestures are tender, not avid; the air that pervades the work is one of quiet intimacy. The tree at the left, its ripe mangoes hanging in clusters, provides additional amatory indications and emphasizes the atmosphere. To the left of the tree that separates it from the couple is another female figure closely resembling the first, but probably unrelated to the narrative involving the couple, if it is a narrative in fact.

There is no clear indication of the divine lovers' identity. Nachna is rich in *Ramayana* scenes. These figures might be of Rama and Sita, but their overt affection tends to discount that suggestion, for the hero of the *Ramayana* stayed within carefully defined limits in his exile. The lovers may be Shiva and Parvati seated atop their favorite mountain; one cannot be certain. The curled locks of hair and the snakelike armlet worn by the male figure provide possible clues, but identification remains open to doubt. Only the mood is certain in this unjustly neglected little work. With its discreet facial expressions, soft, almost imperceptible gestures, and peaceful smiles, the work possesses its own kind of eloquence even if it is not smooth and sophisticated, as so many Gupta works tend to be.

Literature

Krishna Deva, "Gupta Ramayana Panels from Nachna," *Chhavi II,* Benares, 1981; Joanna Williams, *The Art of Gupta India: Empire and Province*, Princeton, 1983.

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2

LOVERS ON A BED
From *Laur-Chanda* series
Gouache on paper
Sultanate, 2nd quarter of the 16th century
21 x 15 cm
Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, No. 57.1/18

Among the more celebrated narrative poems composed in an Indian dialect by Muslim poets is the *Chandayana* of Mulla Daud, also known as the *Laur-Chanda*, after the names of the hero Laurik and the heroine Chanda. The work was completed in A.D. 1378–79; an early copy mentions the name of Mulla Daud's patron as Juana Shah, the Dewan of the Delhi Sultan Ferozeshah Tuglaq. The poet belonged to the village of Dalmau, close to Kanpur, and was a disciple of a Sufi saint. He seems to have picked up a ballad popular in this region of Uttar Pradesh, and also in Bihar and some areas of Madhya Pradesh, and gave it literary form in a work that came later to be held in high esteem for its poetic and narrative qualities.

The story of the intense love of Laur for Chanda speaks of the many trials that their love endured: their separation, the jealousy of a co-wife, loss of a kingdom, adventures, and ultimately, reunion. This poetic work attained a measure of popularity as a subject for painting from the fifteenth century onward, for several illustrated manuscripts of it have come to light, including that in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay. Among the most accomplished works of this period, this leaf shows the lovers sharing a couch and quietly conversing. One of two maids waves a yak-tail fly-whisk (*chauri*), and the other holds a platter. In this series, the division of painting in two registers is quite common (brickwork below, interior of a chamber above). The intent is highly decorative, with elaborate patterning on all the costumes, the cushion and bedspread, the awning, and the architectural features. The work focuses on the pair as they recline on the couch in close intimacy; their physical proximity and the ease with which their bodies touch and intertwine clearly establishes a tender relationship. The maids, their bodies taut and luscious like that of the heroine, contribute distinctly to the overall erotic suggestion in the work.

The Prince of Wales Museum has sixty-eight leaves of this series in its collection, four from an addendum to the work, the *Mainasat*. Other leaves are scattered over private and public collections. The work falls in what is popularly referred to as the *kulahdar* group, with reference to the projecting skull-cap worn by men in this and other works. A Persian influence is visible, as much in the decorative motifs as in the rendering of some figures, but an Indian aura dominates. Scholars disagree as to the precise date, but nearly all agree that it comes from the sixteenth century. Mandu and Jaunpur have been suggested as the two areas with which the work could have been connected, but its "classical quality hard to equal in Pre-Mughal type paintings" is emphasized by more than one connoisseur of Indian painting.

Literature

Karl J. Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, *New Documents of Indian Painting—A Reappraisal*, Bombay, 1969, pp. 94–99, figs. 156–175; Edwin Binney, "Sultanate Painting from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd," *Chhavi II*, Benares, 1981, pp. 25–31; J.P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*, London, 1982, pp. 53, 69–70.

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3

THE FIRST GLANCE
From a *Mrigavat* series
Gouache on paper
Sultanate, 2nd quarter of the 16th century
18.9 x 17.8 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 7844

In the spirited and involved tale of the prince who falls desparately in love with the doe-eyed Mrigavati, a certain measure of attention goes rather naturally to the moment of falling in love, the first glimpse of the beloved. As the princess bathes in the little stepped pool of water, unclothed and attended by two maids, the hero chances upon the scene from a distance and is instantly smitten. We see him seated enclosed in a circle at the left, which is the painter's naive but direct way of rendering a secluded corner. But the prince's gesture, the right hand to the face, forefingers and thumb joined, is of wonder at the indescribable beauty that he beholds in the moment when the princess is revealed to him. On her part, the princess is unaware of the hero's presence, and her smile is a part of her inner charm, a token of the peace of her nature, and of the pleasure that she is deriving from this cooling moment.

The conventions in rendering the female and male forms must have been well established by the time this extensive illustrated copy of the *Mrigavat* manuscript came to be painted; they are followed painstakingly throughout the series. The large lotus-petal eyes that seem to touch the edge of the ears, the arched eyebrows, sharp nose, squat, squarish but fleshy head, the full bosom and extemely narrow waist, form part of the artist's vocabulary. The women are unclad, but their ear ornaments—an ivory peg for the princess, large circular rings for her companions—are seen not only in this series but in other pre-Mughal works of the *Chaurapanchashika* group. The short *kulahdar* turban and *jama* worn by the hero are familiar from other works. One notices these strong connections once again in the stepped brickwork pool, the basket-weave pattern in the water, the two fish which suggest the nature of the element and its freshness.

The leaf is divided into registers, the upper half a view of a chamber with low bed, indicating a part of the princess's palace. Its summary rendering and strict frontality are typical of the style in which the manuscript is painted. What comes across in the leaves of this series is the forceful manner in which the painter draws attention to the emotion belonging to each situation.

Mrigavat, the "strange tale of love, fantasy, magic and the supernatural" to which this illustrated manuscript in the Bharat Kala Bhavan is devoted, figures among the more prominent works of the Avadhi dialect and was composed in A.D. 1503–4 by Sheikh Qutban, most probably at Jaunpur. The copy of the surviving work contains no colophon but the text mentions Hussain Shah Sharqi (1450–1479), who had died before the completion date. The illustrated Varanasi copy is profusely illustrated; in its original state, it had as many as 253 leaves. It is written in the Kaithi script, the work most probably of a Kayastha scribe/painter.

Literature

S.H. Askari, "Qutban's Mrigavat—A Unique Ms. in Persian Script," *Journal of the Bihar Research Society*, XLI:4, 1955; Karl J. Khandalavala, "The Mrigavat of Bharat Kala Bhavan as a Social Document and Its Date and Provenance," *Chhavi I*, Benares, 1971, pp. 19–36.

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4

THE PLAYFUL MAIDEN
Marble
11th century; from Rajasthan
101 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 71–L/5

Standing against a tree and almost merging with it, this young lady belongs to the class of maidens who in Sanskrit literature are spoken of as symbolic lures, "not necessarily the spirits of trees but partaking of the sap of life that flows in them." At once innocent and aware, they are withdrawn and yet reach out. The maiden whom we see here stands, a little self-consciously, in a posture that displays her physical charms to singular advantage, a picture of discreet eroticism. One arm is raised above the head; the other curves along her side to firmly hold the stem of the beautifully rendered tree. The weight of the body rests on one leg while the other is bent at the knee and brought across the other. The twist of the torso affords a clear view of her full bosom, and the gently tilting head displays a smile. The elaborate and elegantly fashioned jewelry around neck, arms, waist, and ankles, are all carved with the delicacy of an ivory worker's touch and greatly enhance the beauty of the figure. The mood is clearly playful and the two spheres which she moves along her back and thighs, even as she appears to stand still, lend an air of rhythmic movement to the figure. So do the two small figures of musicians on either side. Perhaps in this simple play of the maiden there is a poetic suggestion. To at least one scholar it suggested the lines of Kalidasa, in which the ball is made the vehicle of a lover's desire as it is addressed:

> Hit by the hand, soft as a lotus, of my mistress
> You drop, and drop, and rise again.
> Little ball, I know your heart,
> It is as if you fail each time to kiss her lips.

The work belongs to the Solanki period which is marked by extremely delicate, if somewhat mannered workmanship. The artist reveals complete control over the material, which he treats with lace-like intricacy.

Literature

C. Sivaramamurti, *Sanskrit Literature and Art: Mirrors of Indian Culture*, New Delhi, 1970; *In the Image of Man,* London, 1982, p. 37, fig. 69 and color pl. 57.

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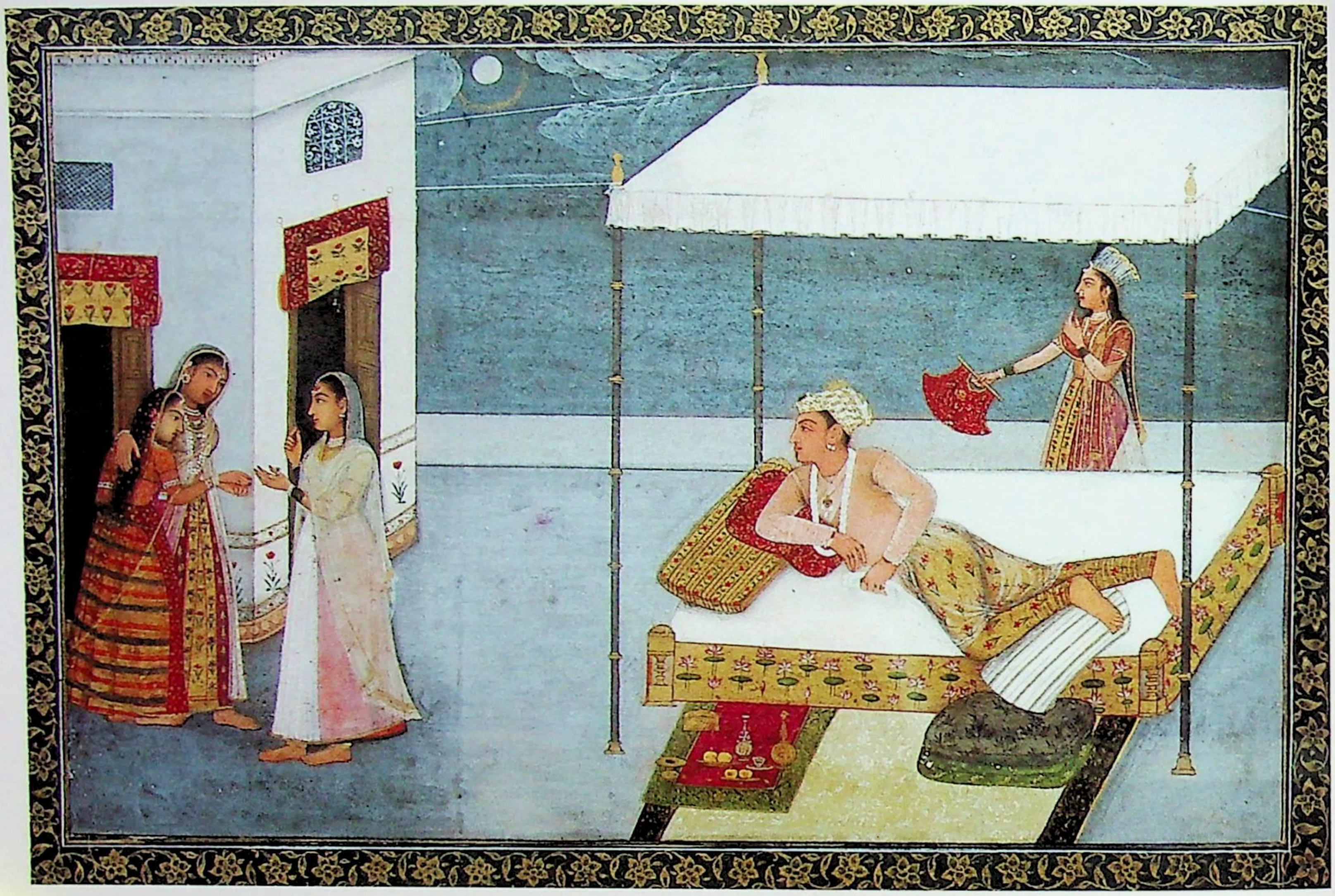
5

A RULER WITH HIS ZENANA
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Jodhpur workshop
Collection of Maharaja Gajai Singhji, Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur, No. 1360

The painting represents something of the triumph of excess. A Jodhpur ruler appears in the exclusive company of his wives and mistresses, indulging in his many sports and pastimes and generally acting like a *rasika*. In this lush garden, with its marble pavilion complete with goldwork awnings and dainty balustrades, the ruler is seen several times, always in the company of the women of his large harem. He is clearly set apart, not only as the sole male, but also because a large gold-rimmed nimbus appears behind his head. Outside, a group of courtiers, ministers, retainers, and dancers all mingle, possibly waiting for their chief to emerge from the garden.

If the male and female types evolved by the Jodhpur painter are a little too stylized, a shade too sweet, and if his compositions tend to be repetitive and slightly stiff, here he seems to bring off a work of dazzling visual effect with great flair in the use of brilliantly patterned color, and capable of yielding great delight to the eye. The composition of the small groups, the beautiful golds and blues of all the women's dresses, the great swirl and flare of the ruler's costume, above all the stunning variety of foliage, a-hum with soft murmurs and seemingly laden with fragrance, impart to this leaf a wonderful luxuriance.

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6

A PRINCE WAITS FOR HIS BRIDE
Gouache on paper
Mughal, 1st quarter of the 18th century
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 79.195

In a variation on the theme of the beloved waiting for her lover, a Mughal painter here shows us a prince waiting eagerly for his bride. It is a summer night; the cool rays of the full moon bathe this elegant marble terrace on which an ample bed has been laid out under a canopy. A female attendant looks after the comforts of the prince, but all eyes are trained toward the left where the young and shy bride is slowly being brought to the inner chamber. There is hesitation in her step, but her companions are reassuring. One of them puts an arm around her shoulder and takes her hand; another faces the young bride, her gestures indicating her amazement at her beauty and probably at her excessive timidity. There are signs of great comfort and luxury in the chamber: its cushions and carpet and patterned bed coverings. Everything indicates great anticipation.

The workmanship is delicate, the general effect of richness in the work comes from so much attention to small details exquisitely worked out.

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7

A RULER IN HIS HAREM
Ivory
18th century; South India
15 x 10 cm
Collection of Mr. D. Natesan, Bangalore

When Shringara is expressed through personal adornment, every detail seems to have been carefully designed and chosen to heighten a mood. This little ivory carved comb has at its center an intimate scene showing a ruler, perhaps a Nayak king, in his harem. He reclines in a large and luxuriant canopied bed, weight on the right elbow as he stretches his legs to the lap of a queen or mistress who sits at his feet. But she does not look at him.

An aura of passion fills the air; the atmosphere of luxury and intimate leisure is nearly perfect. The small scale prevented the carver from lingering upon the beauty of the ladies in this vignette, but he does articulate their feminine forms, their elaborate coiffures, and their jewelry with great care. The figure of the king is a paradigm of attentive, loving manhood.

There are traces of coloring on the comb. The sunken relief is edged by geometrical patterns framing the amatory scene.

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8

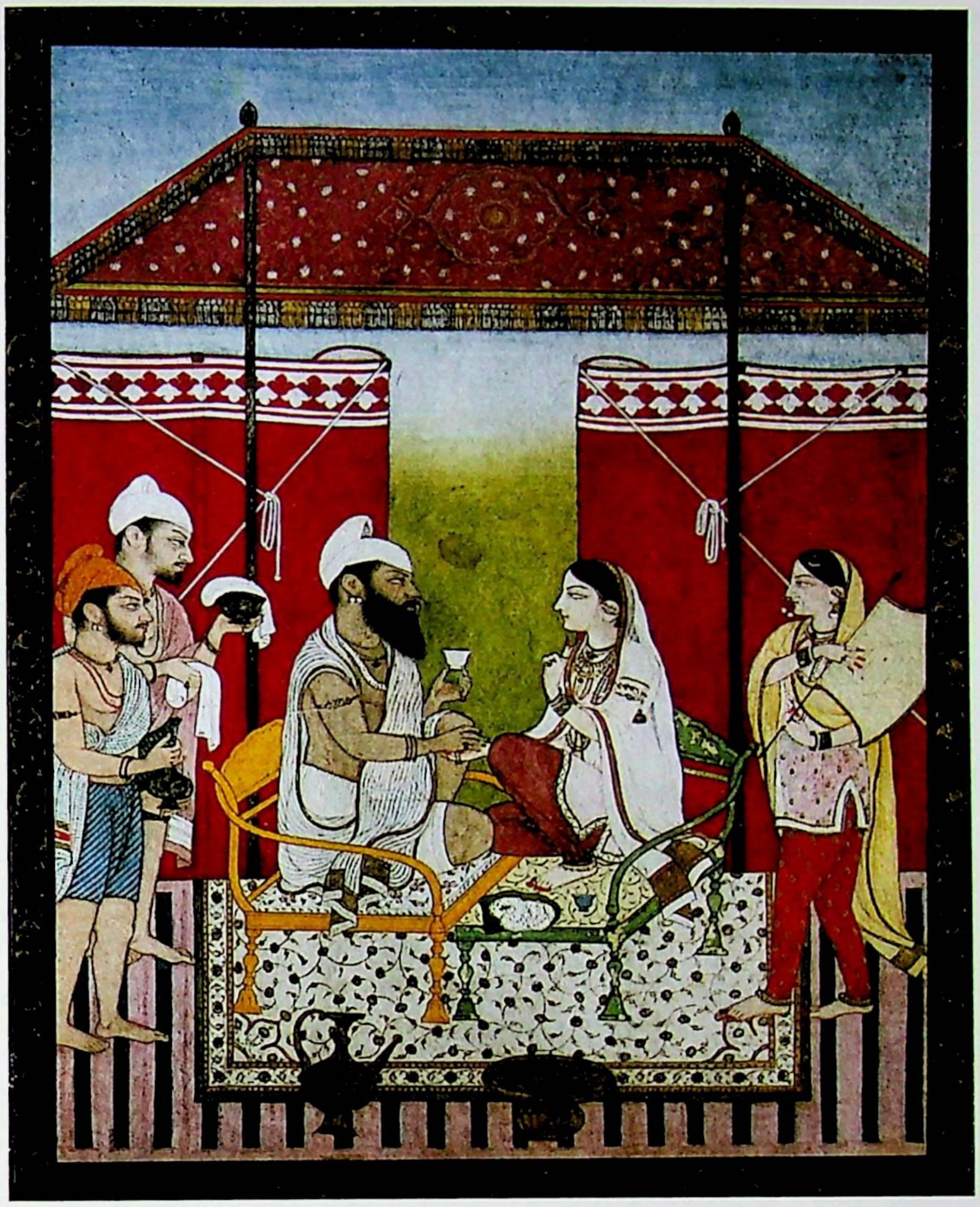
LOVERS ON A COUCH
Terracotta
1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.; from Kaushambi (Uttar Pradesh)
12 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 0.67

> When in the height of passion the clothes had fallen from her hips, the glowing gems upon her girdle seemed to clothe her in an inner silk; whereby in vain her lover cast his eager glance, in vain the fair showed embarrassment, in vain he sought to draw away the veil and she in vain prevented him.

The gentleness with which passion is combined in this Sanskrit verse also informs this delightful little work which, for all its small scale, seems to tell a whole story. This may not necessarily be "lovers on their wedding night"—a suggestion made when this piece was exhibited previously—but the mood is certainly one of quiet eroticism, of withdrawal and eagerness at the same time. The setting is given a certain prominence, and the tall throne with its elaborate footrest may indicate a princely context. The lovers are also sumptuously attired, with marked emphasis on the woman's jewelled girdle which is being fondly handled by the eager lover.

It is possible that the piece belongs to a narrative frieze in which the lovers, perhaps a royal couple, would be placed and easily identified, as would be the case if the theme were a well-known story around which a popular Sanskrit play might have been written. But here we can see the work simply as an isolated piece that catches beautifully and elegantly the mood of passion stirring within the lovers' forms.

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9

A SIKH NOBLE
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 296

These lovers are not idealized, as in so much Indian poetry; they are a Sikh chief and his mistress, closely seated, Indian-fashion, on low, elegantly carved chairs inside an enclosure made by a cloth screen. The suggestion is that the two are in camp, where the Sikh chief is diverting himself in the course of an evening, sharing a cup of wine with the lady and gazing into her eyes. He boldly holds her hand as two male attendants at left and the lady's maid at right look on. The informality of the Sikh chief's dress is echoed in those of the attendants, who also wear knee-length drawers and loosely draped wraps on the upper part of the body. It is evidently hot, and much is permitted.

The painting is the work of a Pahari painter working for a Sikh patron on the plains of the Punjab. Much connects it with the refined tradition of the hills, but it falls short of those works in many ways. The line is clear and the coloring quite discrete, but the figures have become a little squat and lack the grace seen in the best of Pahari work just prior to this date.

W.G. Archer has suggested that the chief portrayed here might be Desa Singh Majithia, the Sikh governor of the hills, but the identification, based on another uninscribed painting of a wedding reception with a Sikh chief prominently seated on a chair, leaves considerable room for doubt.

Literature

W.G. Archer, *Paintings of the Sikhs*, London, 1966, pl. 11, pp. 19–21; B.N. Goswamy, "Sikh Painting: An Analysis of Some Aspects of Patronage," *Oriental Art*, XV:I, 1969.

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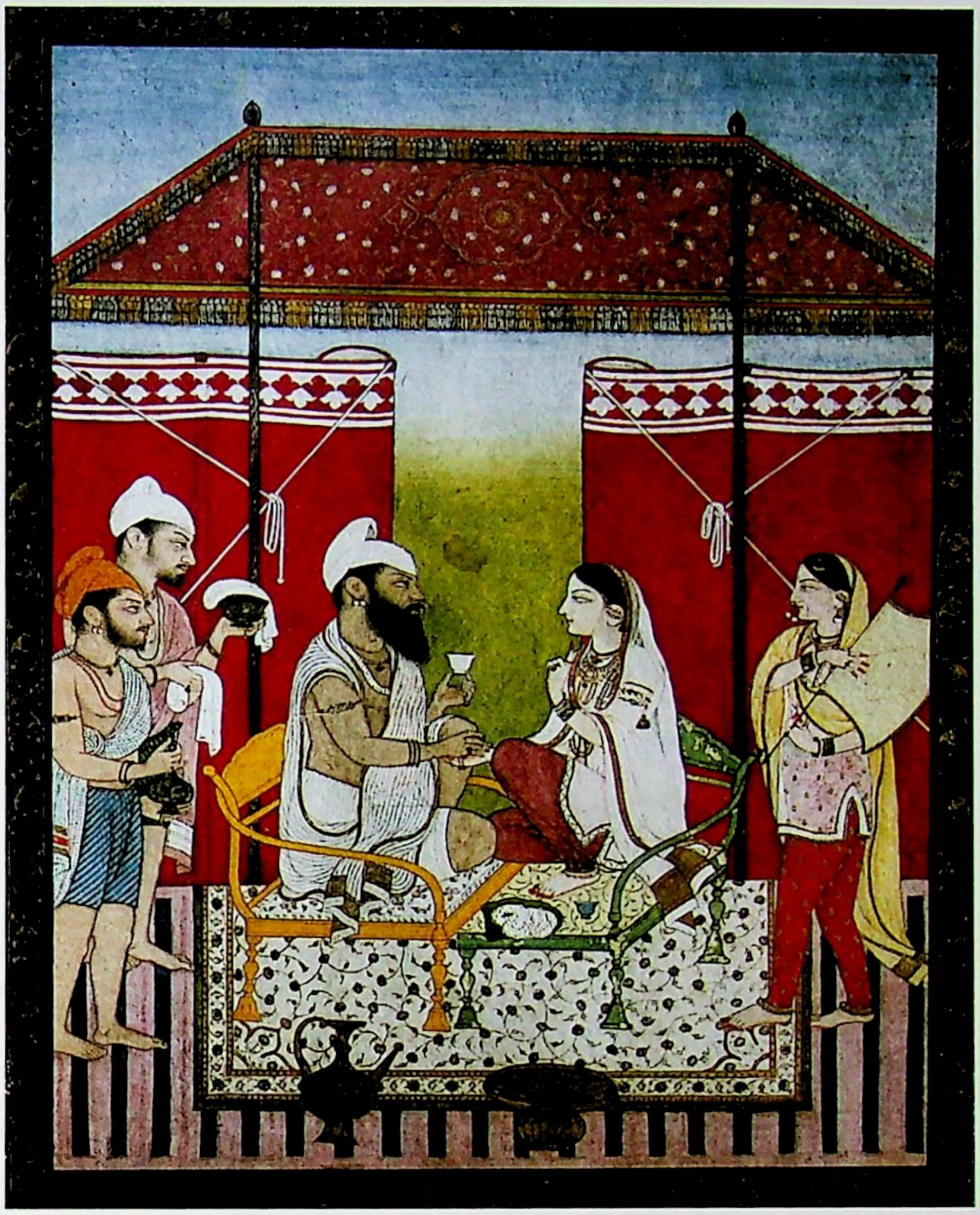
LOVERS ON A COUCH
Terracotta
1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.; from Kaushambi (Uttar Pradesh)
12 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 0.67

> When in the height of passion the clothes had fallen from her hips, the glowing gems upon her girdle seemed to clothe her in an inner silk; whereby in vain her lover cast his eager glance, in vain the fair showed embarrassment, in vain he sought to draw away the veil and she in vain prevented him.

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10

DEVI
Bronze
11th–12th century; from Tamil Nadu
86 x 28 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 47.109/2

Without doubt, Devi is the "Mother of the Universe" in the Indian view, but she is also Shivakamasundari, the beloved of Shiva, most perfect in her beauty. For this reason, she is rendered in image after image with a grace and opulence of form becoming to an ideal of feminine form. The smoothly realized figure, with its slender waist, perfectly formed breasts and buttocks, fleshy and ripe thighs and legs, and its recognizable signs of beauty, such as the faint parallel folds on the stomach and the deep navel, is also endowed with great dignity. There is no overt sexuality in the figure, but the rhythm that flows through it is suggestive of the rhythm of all life, pulsating with possibilities. The sculptor—he comes from the same region in which a devotee would sing passionately a hundred verses in praise of the beauty of the breasts of the adored goddess—knows how to carefully balance the physical with the otherworldly, matter with spirit.

Details of the figure are crisply rendered, starting with the high coiffure and continuing through the chiseled figures of the face, details of the elaborate jewelry, down to the lower garment which clings to her body in elegant folds. The stance is one of languorous ease, with the weight of the body distributed unevenly over the legs, and the left arm parallel to and carefully distanced from the body, restful but possessed of a nervous energy.

The image stems from a Chola workshop; the work tends to be a little later in date than many of the better-known Chola masterpieces, but it manages to avoid the somewhat mannered rigidity which overtakes work in the Chola country a century or two later.

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II

LOVERS IN A SWING
From a *Ragamala* series
On top register, Sanskrit verses inscribed
Gouache on paper
Deccan, last quarter of the 16th century
24.5 x 18.7 cm
National Museum, New Delhi; BKN–2066

The musical mode (*raga*) here is *vasanta*, belonging to the spring season and evoking a mood of passion or verdant celebration. Marked festivity is in the air as a loving couple sits on a gently moving swing (also suggesting a convention of *raga hindola*) and listens to music made on a *vina* by an attractive young singer standing at the left. Two other female attendants sprinkle colored water on the two lovers from syringes in their hands, while other syringes lie in a bucket below, ready to be emptied. The occasion is Holi, that saturnalian festival celebrating the advent of spring. Everything is in blossom: the shrubs in the background, creepers twining around the trees, branches bending and reaching toward each other like lover and beloved, and all the while water runs quietly, completing a picture of luxury and ease.

This superbly executed painting comes from a very early and widely known but dispersed *Ragamala* series from the Deccan, and holds the promise of other great things to come from the same region.

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12

THE GUESSING GAME: THE HERO COVERS A HEROINE'S EYES
From an *Amarushataka* series
On top register; Sanskrit verses inscribed
Gouache on paper
Malwa, 1680
Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, No. 52.1/17

The hero's dilemma and his stratagem for meeting the situation are known from other texts and sources: as he enters, he finds both his lovers on a raised seat, expecting attention from him. Quickly he thinks of a way out: with alacrity he advances and covers the eyes of one of them in a tender, playful gesture and, while she feels a thrill of joy course through her body, he bends down to quietly steal a kiss from the lips of the other one, evidently the greater favorite.

Amarus' celebrated anthology, the *Amarushataka*, is rich in such verses, and the Malwa painter avails himself of these delightful, impulsive situations in this rich and colorful series. The action is set apart in a corner of the royal chamber; the stylized elements of architecture provide a highly ornamental ambience, as does the floral frieze below. The flat, rich colors of the ground help build a distinct mood as this amusing little drama of affectionate deceit is enacted.

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13

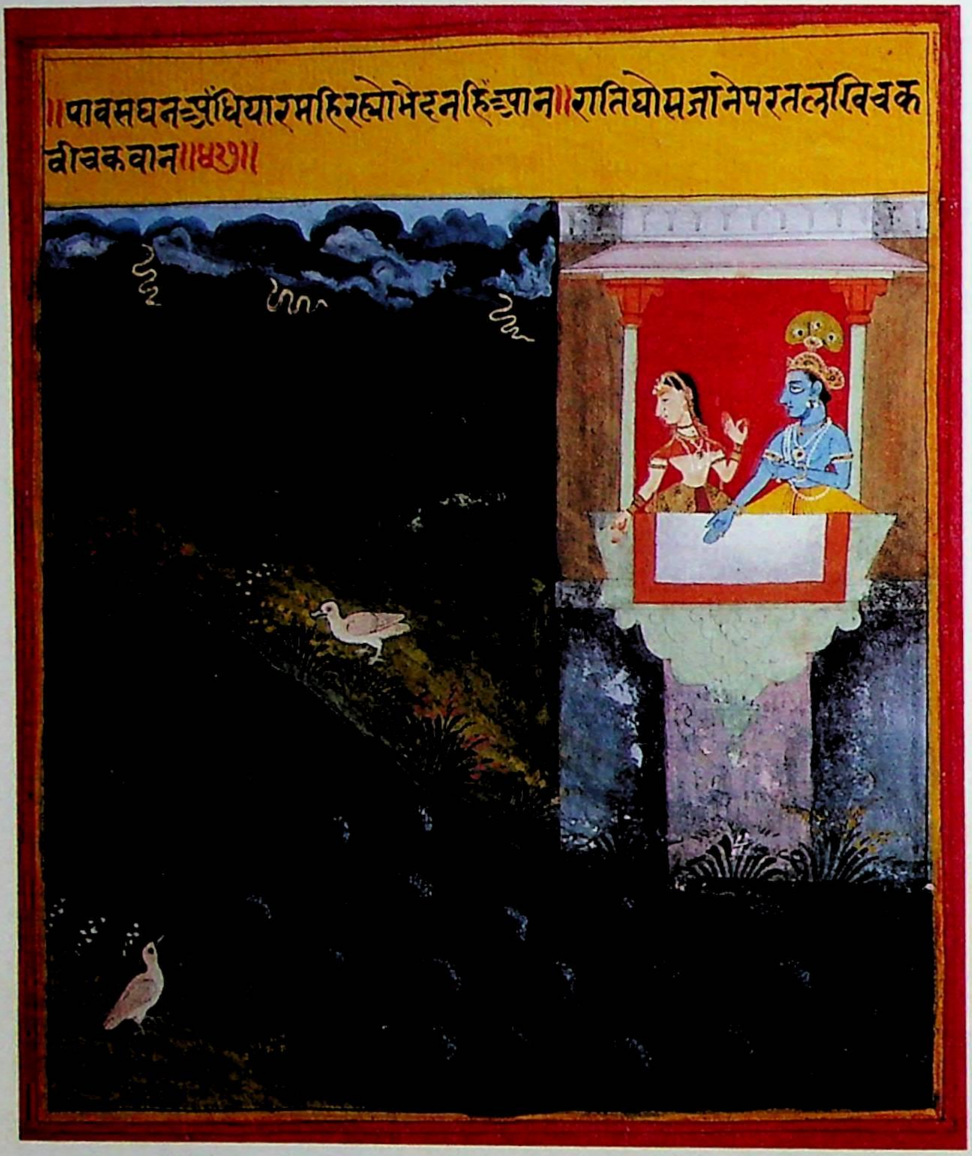
TARA
Basalt
11th century; from Nalanda (Bihar)
105 x 50 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 49.153

This sculptor has worked within carefully laid-down dimensions that mark so much of the sculpture from the Pala country in the east, yet he is able to break free of these constraints in realizing this sensuous form. His material, the dark basalt so commonly employed during this period in this region, does not lend itself well to rendering warmth in the human frame, but the craftsman knows how to get around that problem. The area around the navel, for instance, and the lustrous finish excite tactile sensations; a feeling of closeness to the figure emerges.

While rendering this attenuated but full-bodied form, he establishes certain rhythms which are realized in elements of the design. A swaying rhythm informs the figure; through details such as the heavy end of the jewelled sash that swings to one side, the sculptor builds the suggestion of gentle movement in the form, almost as if at this very moment the elegant lady had shifted her weight from one leg to another.

Because of severe damage to the sculpture, it is not possible to guess what specific aspect of the goddess this figure must have represented, or the manner in which the hands must have been held. But the form seems to make a complete statement even in its present state.

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14

THE DAYS AND NIGHTS OF THE RAINY SEASON
From a Bihari *Sat Sai* series
On top register; verse in Hindi
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1719; by Jagannath of Mewar
22.5 x 22.5 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1903

A part of the prodigious output of the Mewar ateliers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the *Bihari Sat Sai* series, to which this painting belongs. Composed in 1662, this celebrated work of Bihari, as the name implies, consisted of seven hundred couplets, and evidently the Mewari painters depicted all seven hundred of them. This now dispersed, squarish-format series with the couplet in each case inscribed on the yellow strip on top is among the best known of Mewari sets. The quality of the work varies somewhat, for more than one painter was involved in this extensive series, and a relaxation of mental effort is apparent at times, but some of its leaves are visually very poetic.

The present folio takes off from the couplet (*doha*) which says:

> Such is the darkness brought in by the clouds in its season of rains that one can distinguish night from day only by looking at the *chakwa* birds [who, according to legend, can meet only by day, and separate at night].

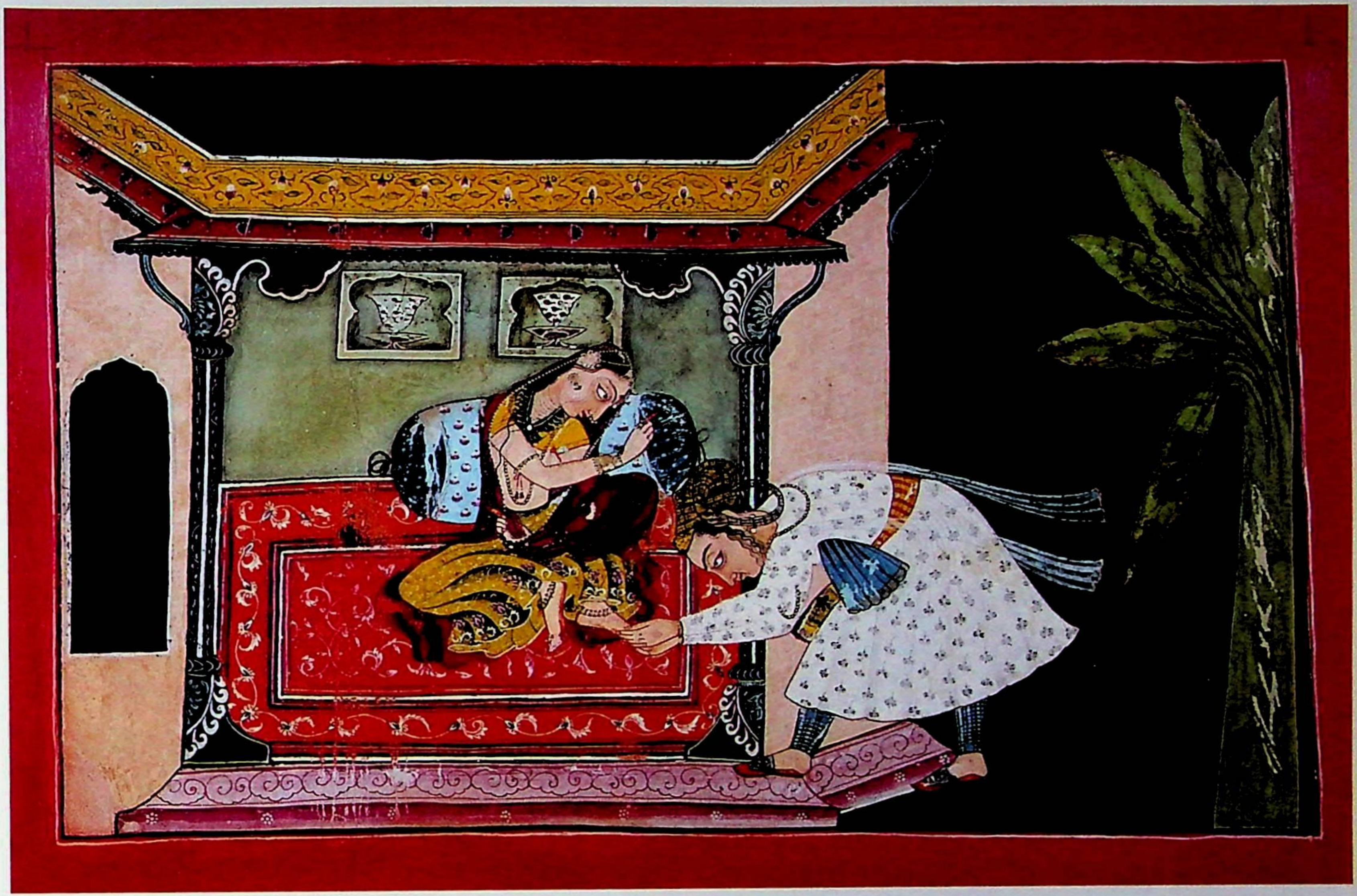
The poet conceived no narrator, but the painter obviously puts the words in the mouth of Radha, Krishna's beloved, as she sits next to him in a pavilion standing on a squarish pillar overlooking a stream. The clouds and lightning, the very dark tonality of the painting, the *chakwa* birds seen on opposite banks of the stream, all reflect the meaning of the *doha*. But there is more to the scene than a description of the season of rains and the dark clouds it brings. Is there an invitation in these words, a suggestion that one does not have to wait for "the appropriate hour" of the night for making love?

The colophon of this *Sat Sai* series gives the date of its completion as equivalent to 1719, and the name of its painter as Jagannath.

Literature

S.K. Andhare, "Three New Documents of the Reign of Rana Sangram Singh of Mewar," *Lalit Kala*, No. 19, p. 60, 1979; Ibid., unpublished doctoral dissertation on Mewar painting (University of Bombay); R.K. Vashishtha, *Mewar Ki Chitrankan Parampara*, Jaipur, 1984, p. 92.

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15

THE OFFENDED MISTRESS
From a *Rasikapriya* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, last quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
21.6 x 31.4 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 408

The cause of the mistress's anger is not made clear, but one can guess it. The *nayaka* has spent the night elsewhere; when he returns, everything about him suggests this. The *nayika*, who has waited for him anxiously, minces no words; she complains and accuses and berates, until, chastised and full of remorse, he falls at her feet, and yet she is not assuaged. The real drama is in the stance of the *nayika*, as she twists her body, bends her head, refuses even to look directly at the lover, and disposes her legs in a manner that gives the painter the opportunity of playing with the rhythmic, swirling shapes made by the scallops of her patterned skirt. Likewise, the loose turban of the *nayaka* and the swinging lappets of the *jama* that he wears, the lock of hair hanging loose at the side of the face, the pearl necklace that has got out of place, are all handled with dexterity. The colors, at the same time, are rich and set up their own resonances.

The painting seems to have belonged to a whole set or series, but while it bears a broad resemblance to some other works from Basohli and Nurpur, not many other examples of this precise series are known. There is a measure of damage and repair in the leaf, but the major part of the work is intact and unaffected by the passage of time.

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16

THE RAINY MONTH OF BHADRAPADA
From a *Baramasa* series
Gouache on paper
3rd quarter of the 18th century; from a Bundi-Kota workshop
Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, No. 15.331

Poets often speak in eloquent verses of the beauty of each month of the year in the context of the shy and timid heroine, who pleads with her lover not to travel and leave her in that month. Thus, while possible separation is hinted, in the visual renderings of such poetry the lovers are almost always seen together, the suggestion being that while together they should savor the beauties of each season.

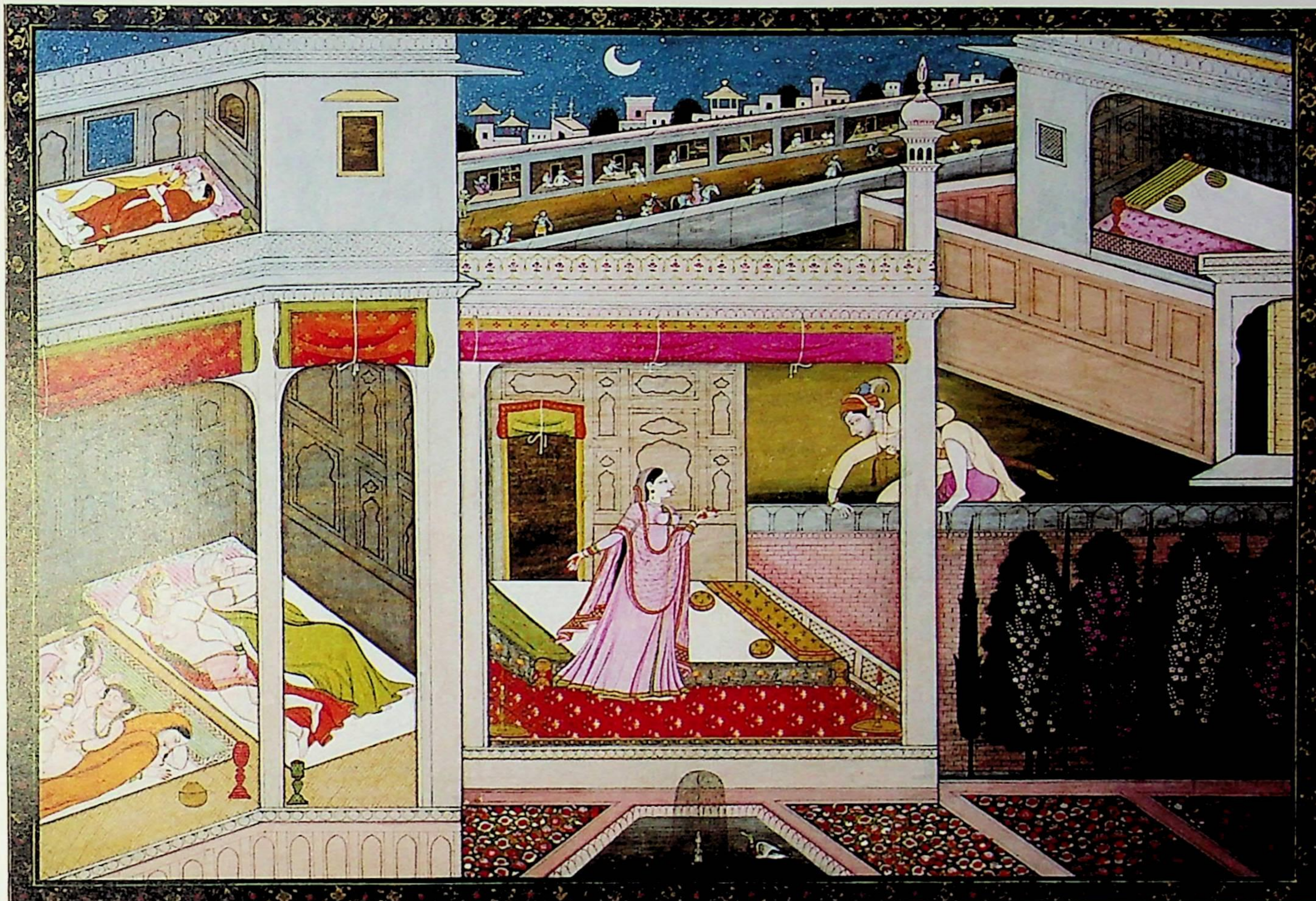
The best-known of the *baramasa* poetry is by Keshavadasa and is included in his *Kavipriya*. The sights and sounds of each month are celebrated in these verses. Describing the month of Bhadrapada (August-September) in superb sound patterns, Keshava conjures up images of the rainy season, emphasizing, alternatively, aspirate sounds like *gha*, *jha*, *dja*; only when these verses are recited aloud does one feel their full beauty. The image of the month is naturally charged with dark clouds, golden lightning, and the sounds of falling rain and wind blowing through whole forests, as well as the restless sounds of elephants and tigers in the jungle, the cries of peacocks and koels, the noise of crickets. But what makes the poems and the paintings valid as an experience is the manner in which things are brought together and arranged.

The lovers stand here on a canopied balcony lost in each other's gaze, as if mutely exchanging thoughts of the gathering, surrounding beauty of nature at this time of the year. Outside in the forest and sky, every single detail of which the poet speaks is brought in by the painter. Of particular interest is the rich, compacted vignette of the forest in the middle distance, where falling trees, disorderly elephants, and swaying creepers present a much more scattered and anarchical image than the neat and orderly trees which the Bundi-Kota painters frequently arrange in their palace gardens.

Literature

Published in V.P. Dwivedi, *Barahmasa*, Delhi, 1980, pl. V.

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17

A LOVER SCALES A WALL
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
24.3 x 34.6 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.286

Stealthy and intrepid goings-on in the night, in a secular setting, is not often seen in Rajput painting. Therefore, when this handsomely attired, princely figure leaves his own chamber, crosses the dark street, and scales a wall to meet his beloved, he takes us, if not her, by surprise. The lady is awake and evidently waiting; but she still points rather helplessly to the inner rooms where, she seems to say, the members of her household are not quite fast asleep.

The exchange between the lovers occupies the center of attention in this elegantly painted page, but the view of life at night, both within and outside the palatial chamber, has its own charm and interest. The female apartments seem to be rather crowded, for one bed is shared by an old lady, perhaps the mother-in-law, with a youthful and nearly nude young woman; on another bed next to it at right angles, a child entirely unclothed sleeps between two women; and on the upper story, a couple lies on a bed in close embrace. The women are lightly clad and their clothes slip from their bodies, the painter delighting in the opportunity to render the nude female form. The middle distance is under moonlight and starlight, while the business of life seems to go on, with shops open and men moving about in the street by torchlight. The complex stylized architectural settings, placed at uneven angles and inadequately explored for their depth, provide the frame for this attractive little human drama of illicit, or at least surreptitious, love. The figures are drawn with the fluid ease associated with the work of this family of artists, and the colors glow with a soft brilliance.

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18

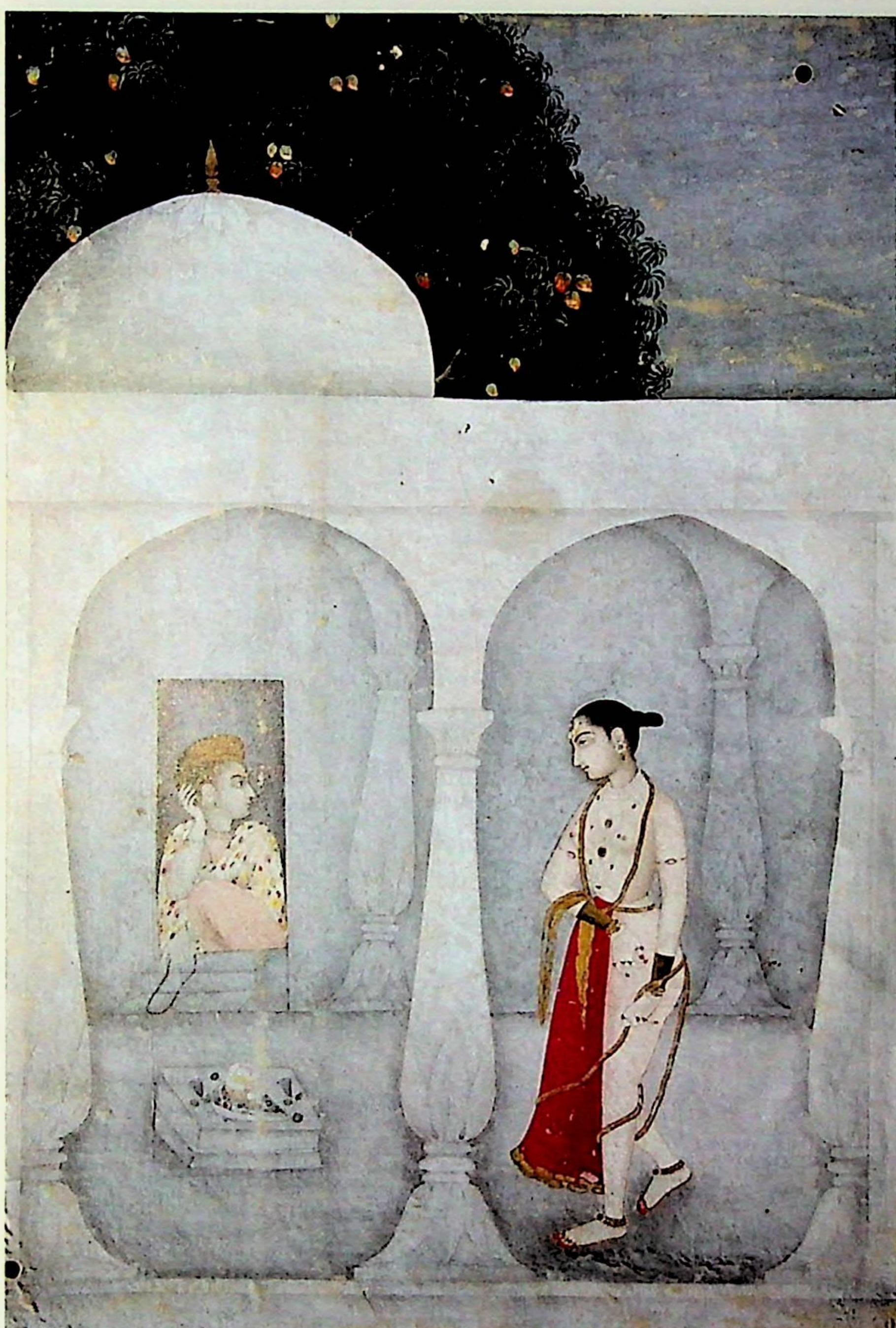
THE YOUNG MAIDEN WAITING
Stone
12th century; from Ghanapur, Andhra Pradesh
89 x 41 cm
State Museum of Archaeology, Hyderabad, No. 1911

This carved figure adorning the fragment of a pillar reminds one of an *utka nayika*, the heroine who eagerly awaits the lover at the appointed meeting place. The turned head and the mixed emotions of anticipation, eagerness, hesitation, doubt, all very subtly registered on the face, contribute to this effect. She has bedecked herself for the tryst with extraordinarily sumptuous jewelry, which is a delight in itself. It is clear that she once stood in triple flexion (*tribhanga*), for there is a bend to the torso, a stance she would easily strike against a tree or a pillar; but one cannot make out how the broken hands might have been disposed. The sculptor, who lavished so much precise attention on her torso and her jewelry, suddenly glosses over some features of the face as if on purpose; his simplified treatment imparts to them great liquid grace. Other figures of this kind from the same site in Andhra Pradesh, Ghanapur, have survived, but this figure, broken and incomplete in its present state, has a curiously tender presence.

Literature

Radhakrishna Sharma, *Temples of Telingana*, Hyderabad, 1972; B. Rajendra Prasad, *Art of South India in Andhra Pradesh*, New Delhi, 1980.

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19

AN ASCETIC SMITTEN
Gouache on paper
Mughal, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from an Oudh workshop
State Museum, Lucknow, No. 59.104

In verbal terms, a beauty "which even recluses turn to look at" is somewhat of a cliche, but visual renderings are not all that frequent. What the painter represents here is not a sequence from any of those countless tales that tell of the resolve of the sternest of *yogis* being broken by the tantalizing appearance of a woman of exceeding beauty. Perhaps the painter is here intent only upon showing an ordinary occurrence, but through it he wishes to focus on the alluring form of the lady. The hour is that of early morning and the woman devotee, dressed after a bath in the flimsiest of *dhotis* that reveals more than it hides, comes to a shrine, perhaps in performance of a vow. But as she steps in, a holy man, apparently a *yogi* or a *sannyasi* with a pile of matted hair coiled atop his head, sees her and becomes transfixed. The lady herself is necessarily unaware of his gaze as she moves toward the center of the shrine, where an icon is placed on a parapet. The *yogi*, who sits behind a little opening in the back wall, seems to have eyes only for her ravishing form. This arousal of passion is also hinted at by bunches of luscious mangoes on the tree rising above the dome of the shrine; the *yogi*'s disbelief at such perfection in the female form is suggested as he scratches his head while turning alertly to look at her. But the painter is content with just this provocative, suggestive scene—two figures each framed in an opening and separated by an elegant marble pillar.

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20

SURASUNDARI: THE CELESTIAL MAIDEN
Ferruginous sandstone
13th century; from Konarak, Orissa
171 x 75 x 71 cm
Archaeological Museum, Konarak, No. 474

On the massive temple at Konarak, high on the projections of the walls, stands a whole bevy of *surasundaris*, "beautiful women of the gods," playing divine music on their instruments or moving their feet in slow, graceful dance. Of colossal size, and thus visible from a considerable distance to anyone approaching the temple, they appear as if visions descended from on high, not frozen far above the ground but engaged in ceaseless unheard song. Joyous of attitude, imbued with some deep, inner calm, these are the languid maidens, self-absorbed messengers of divine presence, as Kramrisch calls them, gentle temptresses who attract the devotee to the god.

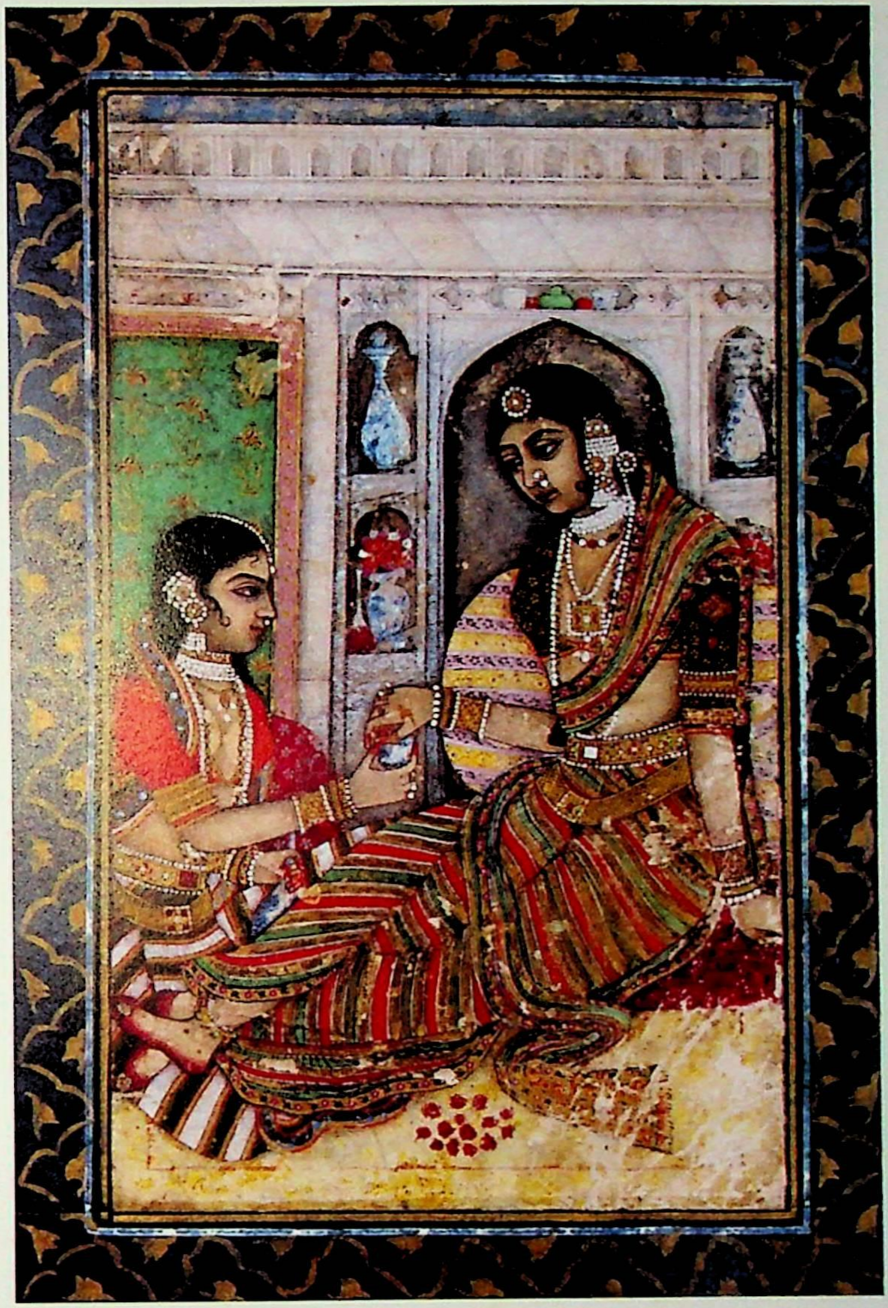
The sculptured scale of these celestial maidens makes their limbs "look as though they had been turned on a potter's wheel." These figures from the great Sun Temple at Konarak (some have fallen or been removed to the safety of museums) embody the eternal feminine. For all their heaviness of form, their full breasts, fleshy thighs, and rounded hips, they still possess a certain lightness of feeling.

Damage is considerable but subtracts little from this figure's impact. One still sees the great delicacy of rendering in the lightly striped lower garment, its transparency such that one must strain to see it. In an exceptionally fine touch, the slightly turned-back loop in the garment around the area of the navel is made to project, inviting tactile contact. The lute-like stringed instrument in her left hand, pressing against her breasts and matching their roundness, is now broken. But it is as if one still hears the music that emanates from it.

Literature

Ancient Sculptures of India, 1984, No. 71.

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21

A LADY BEING OFFERED WINE BY A CONFIDANTE
Gouache on paper
Deccan, 2nd quarter of the 17th century; from a Golconda workshop
12.9 x 7.5 cm
Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, No. 5240

There is no obvious significance to this subject, which could be an ordinary, everyday occurrence. But the lavish care with which the painter treats his stately, elegant figures places them in the context of love. The principal figure, the statuesque lady who sits with her legs stretched out and resting in the lap of her companion, is evidently seen by the painter as a beloved, completely immersed in thoughts of love. The moment is not significant in itself: the companion holds a wine cup filled from the flask in her left hand, and the other woman reaches for it. A mood of loving anticipation is established by the sumptuous jewelry and the superbly patterned *sari* with its striped body and floral border, one end curling across her outstretched thighs and legs as if interpreting the state of her mind. After these details have been absorbed, one begins to notice the facial expression on the women. The princess seems uncertain; will he or won't he arrive at the proper moment?

The painter from Golconda from whose workshop this sumptuous leaf comes tends to depict tall and full-figured women; he also moves very close to them, as if attempting to unravel the secrets they contain.

Literature

Mark Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting*, London, 1982.

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22

"WITH PASSION IN HER HEART": THE ABHISARIKA
From a *Nayika-bheda* series
On top border, *abhisarika nayika* in Takri characters
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
18.9 x 17 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.213

Not many works from this series are known to have survived, but the subject of this one is stated in a Takri inscription on the top border. From literature we know this *nayika* as the one who sets out in the night, unmindful of dangers of all kinds, for she must keep the tryst with the lover. Poets sing of her single-minded purpose, her devotion to her lover, of her courage; painter after painter has rendered her in his own fashion.

When this *abhisarika* steps out of her home, the sky is overcast, with lightning among the clouds. She proceeds undeterred though a ceaseless and insistent rain, nor does the forest, full of serpents and animals, succeed in holding her back. In the more usual representations, the painter brings in the forest and its goblins in elaborate detail, but this painter from Mankot focuses on the steady rain that falls like pearl-drops in strings of uneven size. Some attention is paid to the clouds and lightning, but most is on the marvelous curtain of rain that forms a dramatic backdrop to the woman's movements. A serpent clings to her ankle, but as the poet says, she does not even notice it. The *nayika* is like a vision, lit dramatically against the dark background and moving with lithe grace and steadfast purpose. Such *nayikas* appear in a large number of paintings from Mankot, in the *Bhagavata Purana* series, for instance, and in a *Ragamala* of which some leaves have survived. But each time one sees this form, one is surprised by its freshness.

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23

WOMAN AND SCORPION
Red sandstone
5th century; Uttar Pradesh
75 cm
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 25021

A Sanskrit verse, probably by Bhavabhuti, runs:

> The folds of her waist are the exudation of allurement from the three interstices of the creator's fingers, as he balances her within his fist, adding weight to loins below and breast above.

It is images like this, at once graphic and sensuous, of which the sculptor avails himself every so often in the high periods of Indian art. The suddenness of a movement that allows an unexpected glimpse, innocent play in the course of which a state of mind is revealed, are things that the poet and the sculptor alike seize upon, as here, where a scorpion, faintly visible in the narrow band indicating rocks at the base, startles a young maiden of alluring form, with those "smooth thighs" of which the poet speaks. Since the upper part of the figure is broken, one cannot be certain about its former appearance, but it is a fair guess that above the narrow waist with its elegant folds, the breasts must have held the loins in balance by their weight.

There is wonderful rhythm in the form, and the transparency of the drapery, a cliché in some female figures in this period, is here sensitively exploited to point to that "root of bliss," in the poet's discreet phrase. A sense of jerky motion is communicated by the long, pendant necklace that falls across the bare torso and swings to one side, while the stylized folds along the edge of the lower garment, so sumptuous and so delicate, set off the plain bareness of the lower part of the body, the clinging, revealing surface.

Literature

Ancient Sculptures of India, 1984, No. 54; Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.*, Washington, D. C., 1985, No. 26.



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24

THE GALE OF LOVE
Gouache on paper
Pahari, last quarter of the 18th century
15 x 10 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 5547

What appears initially to be a simple depiction of a youthful maiden hastening indoors takes on rich and poetic nuance when seen in the general context in which Pahari paintings frequently interpret seemingly common situations. However, her bent form and thoughtful expression provide the clue to the action, for almost certainly this is a visualization of a verse of the seventeenth century poet, Bihari, from his celebrated *Sat sai*:

> This is no cloud of monsoon that I see above in this sky; these are clouds of smoke that rise from the fires of separation which have consumed the rest of the world and now advance toward me.

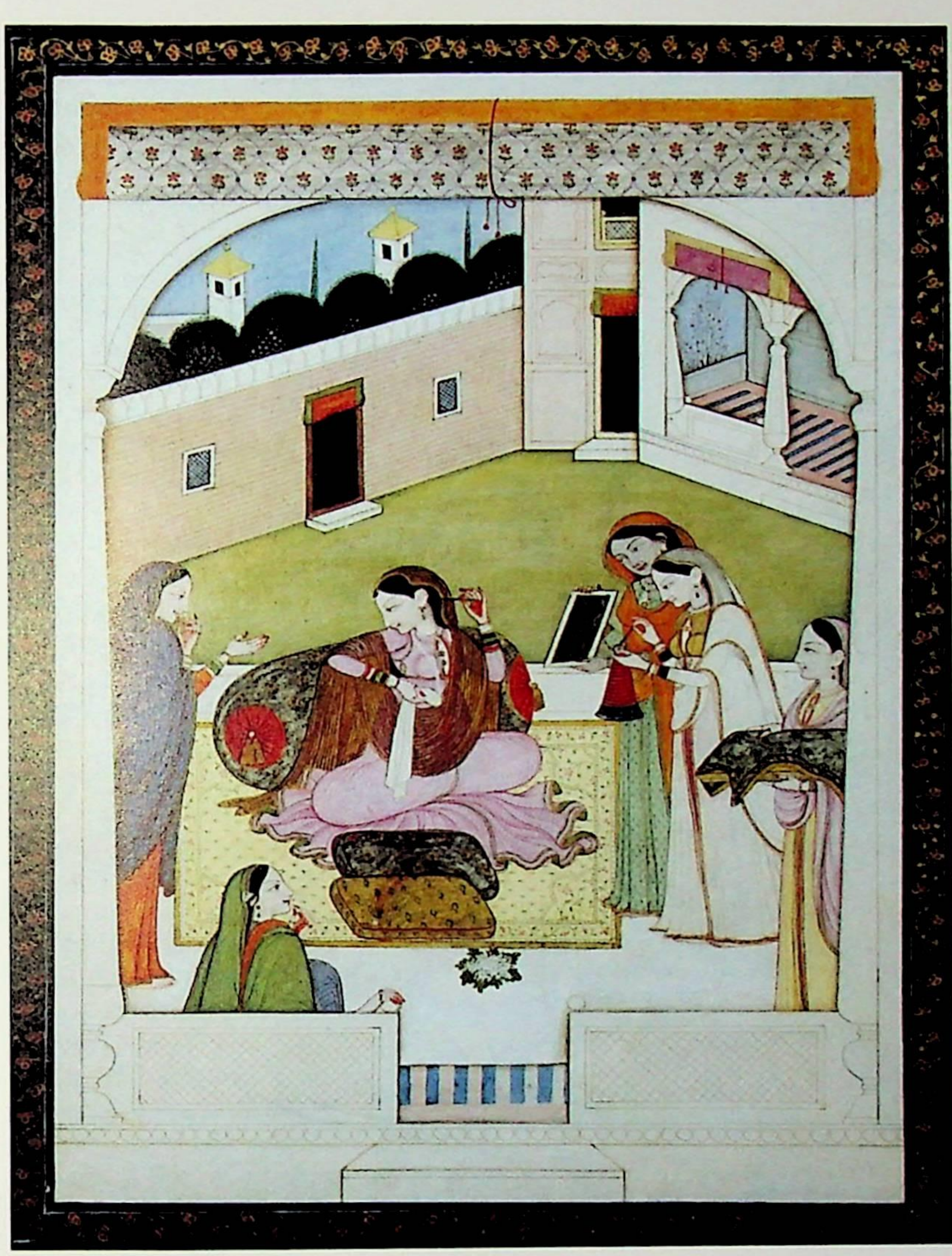
Clearly, the young woman is one who is separated from the lover. The monsoon rains have come and with them the season of lovers' longing. But, separated as she is from hers, she cannot bear the sight of these clouds. In a different setting and at another time, when the lover had been with her, she would have sung or celebrated the arrival of the rain clouds.

There is wonderful clarity in the painting, and the cool whites of the terrace juxtaposed with the range of grays and blacks in the sky, the fluttering of the veil which the woman is barely able to hold in the strong wind of memory that is blowing, the somewhat pensive expression, and the down-turned glance, each have their own story. Passion seems to inform the entire painting, as it does the woman's slender, elegant form.

Literature

Published in *Chhavi II,* Benares, 1981, pl. 33; *Bharat Kala Bhavan Ka Suchipatra*, Varanasi, 1945, No. 61.

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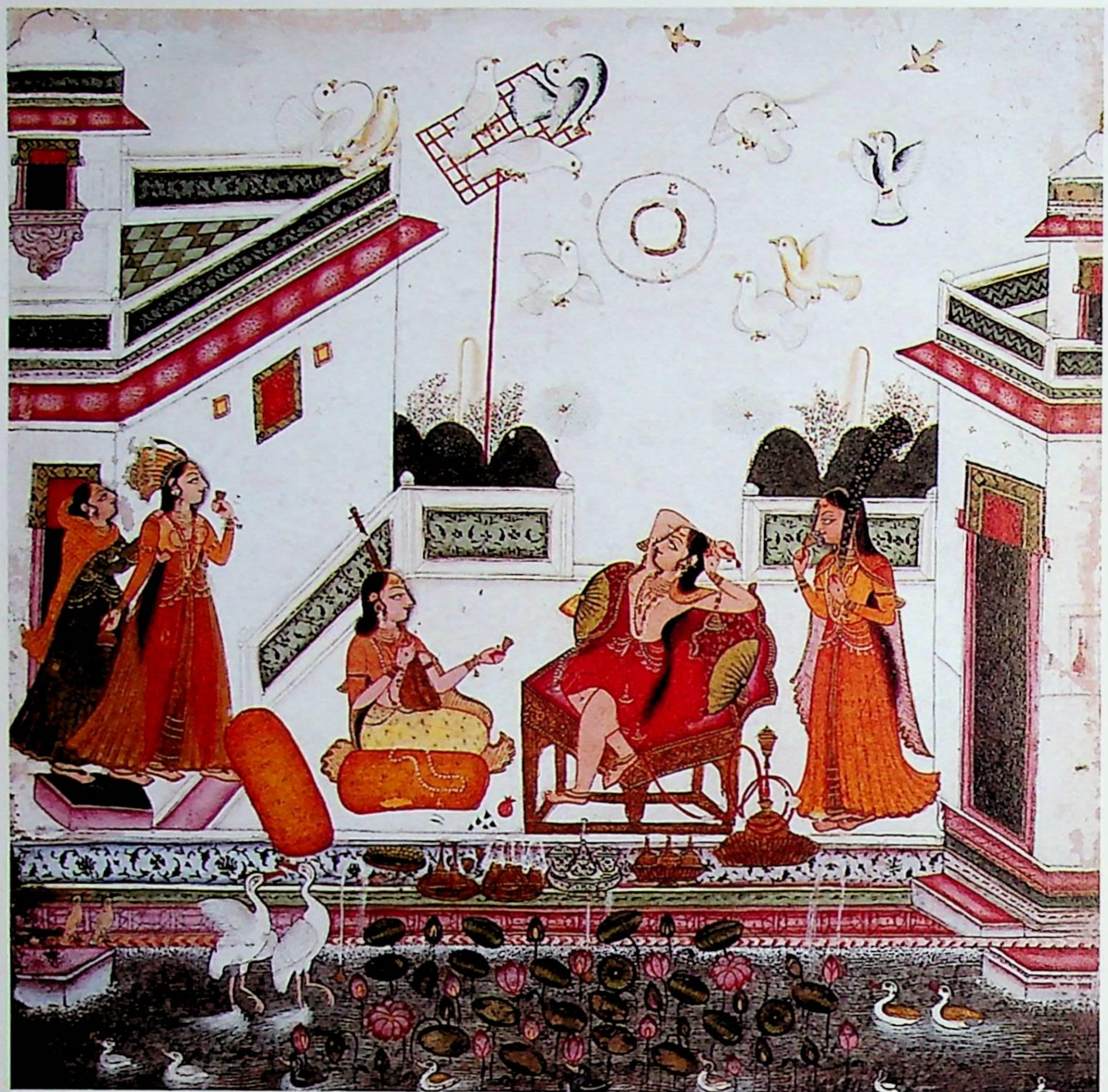
25

IN ANTICIPATION OF HIS COMING
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
24.3 x 19 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.296

A minor but delightful section is devoted, in the paintings of love and works on rhetoric, to descriptions of the beauty of the beloved "from her toenails to her head (*nakha-shikha varnana*)." In similes and metaphors that become a little trite with time, the body of the beautiful heroine is described in detail. The poet speaks of the richness of her hair dark as the night, her bowlike eyebrows, the lotuses that are her eyes, the nose with the sharpness and elegant curve of a parrot's beak, the lips ripe and red like the *bimba* fruit; thus it goes, literally, from top to toe. The Pahari painter frequently has woven these descriptions into renderings of *nayikas* adorning themselves, completing their toilette, checking every detail at the last minute, barely a moment away from the lover's arrival.

The young lady here applying a collyrium stick to her lovely, elongated eyes turns away, as if suddenly shy of her own reflection in the mirror held by a maid. She has evidently had news of her lover's arrival. The *sakhi* at left makes a jocular remark at this abashment; another, seated close to the marble balustrade in front, gestures in amazement at the lady's beauty. The maids, holding a mirror or a collyrium container and a tray of gifts covered with an embroidered cloth, stand at right. The beauty's state of mind is hinted at by the flare, twists, and turns of her elegantly arranged skirt, and by the fragrant flowers at the edge of the carpet. The background is a little dry and schematic, but the principal part of the painting is rich in its mood of anticipation and shyness.

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26

REMINDERS: A NAYIKA GAZES AT COURTING PIGEONS
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from a Bundi-Kota workshop
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 4147

Just out of the dainty little lotus pond, a young lady dressed only in a brief lower garment tenderly gazes upward at a group of pigeons that perch or flutter about a high grilled perch. The birds coo and circle in a kind of mating ritual; the males sit puffed up, and one female looks down, almost sympathetically, at the woman. Hearing and seeing them, her heart turns to thoughts of her lover. It is a luxuriant, indolent setting, nearly perfect except for the absence of the lover upon whom everyone's thought seems to center.

With this customary fineness and attention to detail, the painter of this delicate work makes us aware of significant details. The fragrance of love seems to pervade the air as the bare-breasted heroine of this painting takes it all languorously in.

Literature

Published in *Chhavi II*, Benares, 1981, color pl. 25.

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27

LADY WITH THE MIRROR
Sandstone
11th century; from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
82 x 39 cm
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 25229/1364

"Strange are some things," the poet says, speaking of his beloved. He notices that her speech sounds as sweet as a lute, but no string can be seen; her bosom is like round vessels that have no necks: her eyes are lilies, but they do not grow in water; her thighs are plantain stems without leaves, her hands creepers without branches.

Such images, of which Sanskrit poetry is so full, must have pervaded the minds of sculptors who crafted these extraordinary works adorning the temples of medieval India. From Khajuraho, where temples sprout with erotic sculpture in unbelievable profusion, comes this poetic young lady who regards her image in a mirror. The frank sensuality of this figure, seen only by herself and not in intimate male company, derives from a certain celebration of life in all its opulence. The stances are studied, eyes convey a kind of invitation, the self-absorption is perhaps just a ploy. These damsels seem denizens of a different, unearthly world. The full, lush body, the exquisite jewelry that serves to heighten by contrast the suppleness of flesh, the graceful manner of standing, the insouciance with which subsidiary figures are ignored, are all a part of the manner that the Chandella sculptors worked out to such perfection in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The connection with the tree that forms a canopy above the head is not accidental, for the suggestion is that she is of the nature of the tree, full of sap and fertile possibilities. That love is somewhere in the background of such images, should there ever be any doubt, is clear from telling but discreet details—the nail-marks seen close to the breast, left there by the lover in a bout of passion. This figure formed a bracket that must once have adorned a temple interior or outside wall; hundreds of similar figures are still in place.

Literature

Mario Bussagli and C. Sivaramamurti, *5000 Years of the Art of India*, New York, 1978, No. 247.



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28

PRINCESS APPLYING A MARK ON HER FOREHEAD
Gouache on paper
Mughal, 3rd quarter of the 17th century
36 x 27 cm
Patna Museum, Patna, No. 586

An elegant young lady standing alone in a garden raises her right hand toward her forehead, index finger slightly extended. The gesture is understood, however, only when one notices that her left hand, similarly raised, is also held at the same level: there is a tiny mirror on the thumb-ring on that hand. She is applying to her brow a little circular dot (*bindi*), auspicious and decorative as well, and the mirror helps her check the effect. The entire figure is finely executed, much attention having gone to the superbly designed and embroidered clothing, including the patterned pajama, the diaphanous skirt through which the pajama shows, the brief bodice (*choli*), the long scarf (*dupatta*) draped on the upper part of the body and partially covering the head. The effect is enhanced further by the delicately rendered jewelry, all those bracelets and anklets, pearl strings and pendant earrings. But the painter has enhanced this delicacy through this dainty and unexpected touch of the tiny mirror on the thumb-ring. This small detail takes the place of a flower or a cup of wine held in the hand, which one sees in so many other Mughal paintings of solitary princesses and courtesans. The painter completes the picture by introducing two flowering plants and a few small bushes in the foreground. Visually, everything leads repeatedly to the woman, who is seen as an embodiment of loveliness, not frank and sensual as in much Rajput work, but somewhat withdrawn and discreet.

The painting is mounted on an album leaf from a much later time. A narrow floral border that surrounds the painting is clearly an uncertain attempt at further embellishment, but it detracts rather than adds to the total effect.

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29

THE ILLUMINATED CHAMBER OF LOVE
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 659/649

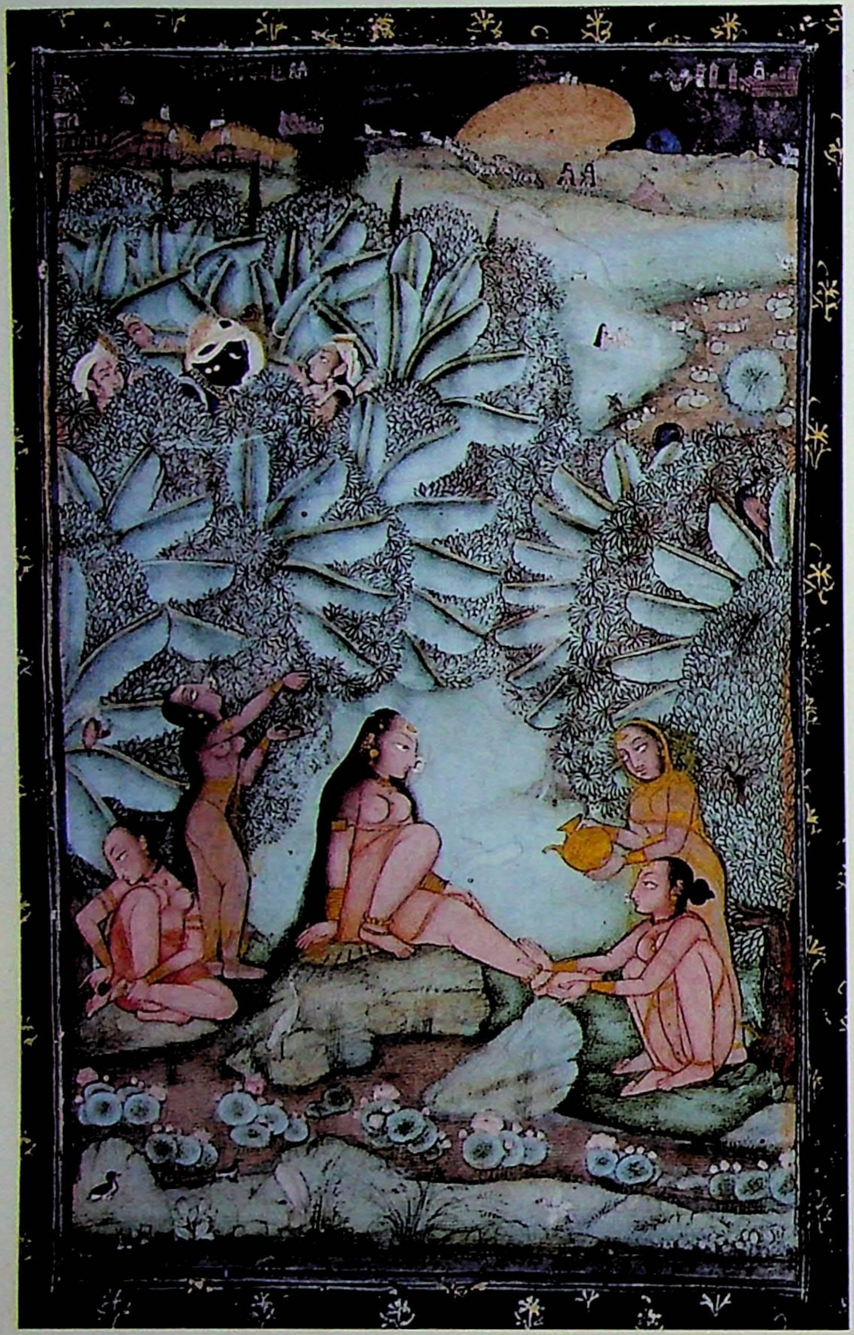
It is not the Indian festival of lights (Dipavali), that one sees here: the inner courtyard is alight with the anticipation of love. Only three candle-stands, all placed on the floor, suggest that what we are seeing on the mirrored walls in the alcoves are but reflections of these lights (such mirror-chambers were common in many an Indian palace). They are all aglow because they mirror a state of mind, that of longing and the expectation of union with the lover. The young lady who sits on this elegantly draped bed has evidently prepared elaborately for her lover's momentary arrival, as is suggested by the garlands, the jewel-studded box with betel leaves, and the bowl of perfumed water on the floor. Above all, she has bedecked herself in her finest raiment and jewelry. The texts on Indian rhetorical poetry describe her as a *vasakajja-nayika*—"she who waits for the lover with the couch of love prepared."

The painting may well belong to a *Rasikapriya* series, based on the well-known work of Keshavadasa, the sixteenth century poet.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings on Love*, New Delhi, 1962, fig. 39; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, vol. I, London, 1973, pp. 305–307.

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30

THE LADY AT HER TOILETTE
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from the family workshop of Bagta-Chokha of Deogarh
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 63.1783

Surrounded by her companions, a young lady sits on a rock by a little lotus pond in a secluded grove far from habitation. Clad only in a diaphanous wrap, she extends one leg and flexes the other bringing it up to cover part of her nudity. Her long, luxuriant hair falls in a cascade at her back. Two companions attend her: one seated and almost entirely nude, holds the lady's extended foot in her hands as if to cleanse and massage her body, while behind, a standing woman pours water from a vessel. Two other companions attend mostly to themselves, one plucking flowers and the other sitting in a relaxed posture scrubbing the sole of her left foot.

Unseen by this leisurely and unselfconscious group, a male head appears above the copse. It is Krishna, judging from the dark complexion and the peacock feather stuck into his loosely tied turban.

Clearly the intention is not to represent a known episode from the story of Krishna. Krishna may in fact have been introduced here as an afterthought. All that the painter wanted to show was this group of lovely, fleshy women at their toilette, out in the open, unmindful of any possibility of their privacy being invaded. The occasion is used to depict the female figure from different angles, in different attitudes and postures, as a subject of delight in itself.

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31

AFTER THE BATH
Red sandstone
2nd–3rd century; from Sanghol, Punjab
101 x 18 x 14 cm
Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Punjab, Chandigarh, No. 103

Among the most sensational archaeological finds of recent years in India has been the discovery of the ruins of a *stupa* at Sanghol, between Ludhiana in the Punjab and the modern city of Chandigarh. That the little village of Sanghol stands on an ancient site has been known for a long time, but recent excavations have yielded artifacts that have far surpassed previous expectations. Aside from the *stupa* with its schematic foundation, an incredible range of sculptures has been found, mostly consisting of railing pillars and cross-bars carved in the Kushana style so clearly associated with Mathura. The figures are remarkably well preserved, for they seem to have been laid on their sides and buried carefully in pits on the site, apparently at an early point, perhaps for fear of destruction or vandalism. The pillar figures are almost certainly the product of a Mathura workshop and may well have been transported to this site after having been carved. Even if they do not always attain the remarkable quality of Mathura work—the Kushana period at its best—they undoubtedly reflect its grandeur and are informed by the same rhythms, if not the same passions.

This figure of a *yakshi* wringing her hair after a bath belongs to a well-known class. One can visualize an array of female figures with similar opulent chains, sprouting in lush profusion on pillar after pillar of the *stupa* railing at Sanghol. Here the sculptor returns to a theme well-loved by the Indian poet and artist: a *hamsa* bird, mistaking in its eagerness the drops of water falling from the damsel's wet hair for a rain of pearls, reaches out for them.

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32

YAKSHI ON A RAILING PILLAR
Red sandstone
2nd century; from Jaisinghpura, Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)
89 x 18 x 18 cm
Government Museum, Mathura, No. 000/12

Despite the long years during which they have been the center of so much attention, a certain enigma still attaches to these *yakshi* figures, imbued with such sexual grace and power, which adorn railing pillars that once stood around Buddhist or Jaina *stupas*. *Yakshis* assume a remarkable variety of postures and actions—talking to birds, looking at themselves in mirrors, adjusting necklaces or garlands, attending to their hair. Symbols of abundance, they are associated with the proliferating powers of nature—fertility, prosperity. When seen standing in ineffable grace under trees and bending a branch, they are referred to as *shalabhanjikas* or *vrikshakas*, meaning that their bodies become "expressive of curved and burgeoning arborescence." Something in these figures eludes us still, but this does not prevent our taking in the great beauty of their bodies—erotic, inviting, emphatic.

More difficult to comprehend are the vignettes found with regularity above and below such standing figures. Beneath their feet frequently appear little gnomelike figures, goblins crouching uneasily. Perhaps they are precursors of later animal or bird mounts (*vahanas*) that become the attributes of the gods and goddesses of the Indian pantheon, but this understanding of the gnomes is not truly convincing. Above the *yakshi* is an unusual scene: a man who seems to be asleep leans his head against a balcony railing, but he might also be attempting to control his feelings, unable to bear the sight of the dazzling beauty on the pillar. Scenes above the figures and generally behind railing designs are often as inexplicable as those below. But even seeing the main figure more or less in isolation from motifs above and below it rewards the attention, for they have an extraordinary beauty, whether from Bharhut, Sanchi or, as here, from Mathura.

Most figures appear nude, with the occasional suggestion of a diaphanous garment. Breasts are almost always uncovered, the waist with its deep navel is in plain sight, any girdle or lower garment is very suggestively parted or even lifted by the lady to reveal her femininity. The many-stranded girdles (*mekhalas*) are worn deliberately low, as if about to slip. The facial expressions of the *yakshis* are almost always soft and gentle, as if they are eager to share their allure but do not intend to press it. A quiet, amused withdrawal, the smile reaching the eyes from the corners of the mouth, characterizes this expression. The coiffures and carefully selected jewelry attain great and subtle variety, always enhancing the lure of the women's forms.

This *yakshi* stands in a posture typical of such figures. The body is bent in triple flexion (*tribhanga*),

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head gently tilted, hip slightly thrust out, the legs bearing the weight somewhat unevenly. The arms are both broken, but it is likely that with her right arm she was adjusting an earring while she held the end of a scarf with the other.

J.P. Vogel, speaking of the *yakshis*, once quoted a passage from the *Mahabharata* in which a puzzled man addresses questions to a damsel whom he sees like a lovely vision in the forest:

> "Who art thou," he asks, "that, bending down the branch of the kadamba tree, shines lonely in the hermitage, sparkling like, at night, a flame of fire shaken by the breeze . . . ? Art thou a goddess or a *yakshi* or a *danavi* or a celestial nymph or a fair dainty damsel, or a beauteous maiden of the king, or a night-wandering one in these woods?"

Well might this question be addressed to this lady and many other of her kind, even today.

Literature

J.P. Vogel, "Mathura School of Sculpture," *Archaeological Survey of India*, Annual Report, 1906–07; Ibid., *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum at Mathura*, Allahabad, 1910; Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, London, 1955, pl. 39; *In the Image of Man*, London, 1982, No. 66.

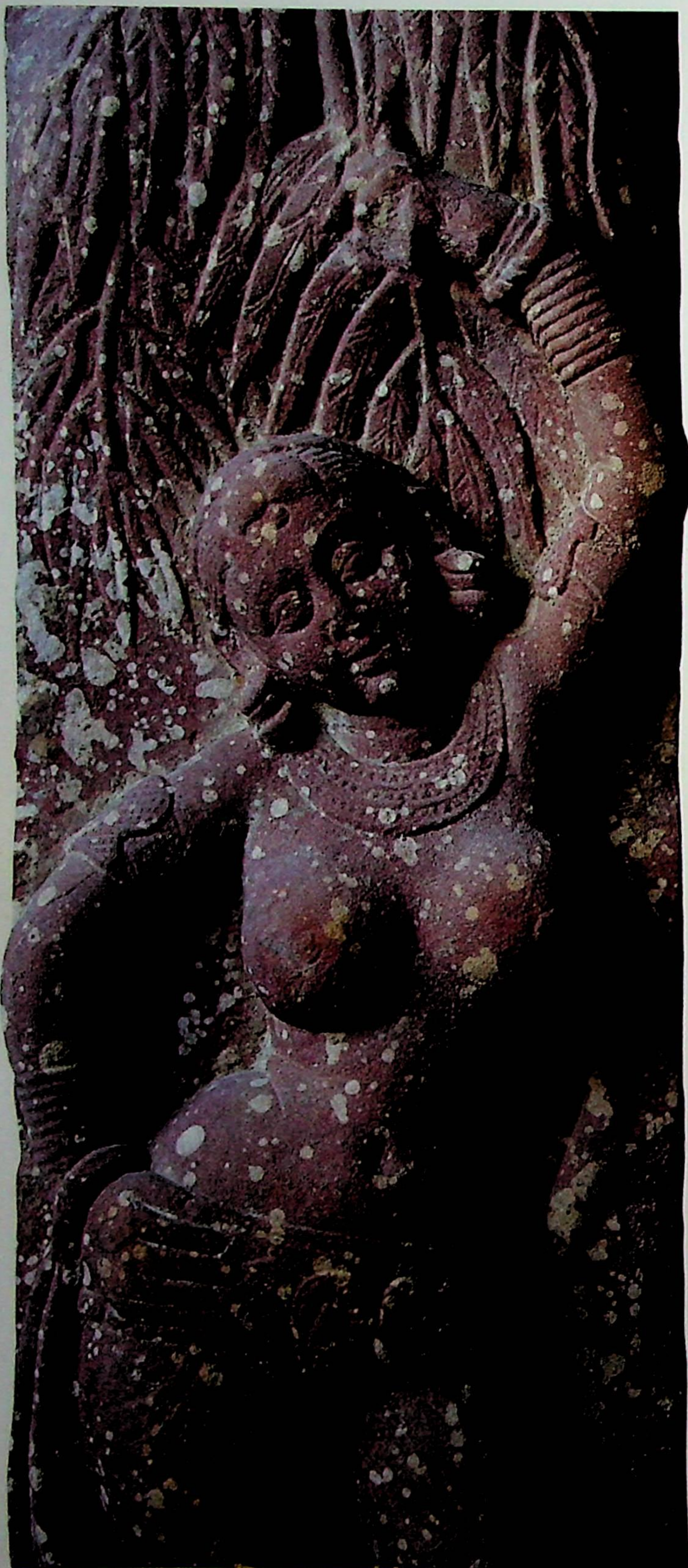
33

ATTENDANT FEMALE FIGURE WITH A SWORD
Red sandstone
2nd century; Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
100 x 19 x 18 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. J-275

The formidable double-edged sword that this attractive young lady carries aloft at first belies her true nature. But she is not to be seen simply as a guardian figure. Part of the total program of sculptural decoration on the railing of a *stupa*, she fits much more naturally into the range of semidivine figures, or *yakshis*. They adorn railing posts and seem to be part of a grand conception that possibly envisages the *stupa* as some suprahuman domain with royal associations. The *shalabhanjikas*, figures that at once signify the spirit of fertility and female beauty at its enticing best, strike provocative attitudes; this gently smiling young lady lightly crosses her legs in a posture of ease, raising her right arm above her head to touch a bough, with the full awareness that this allows her bodily charms to be seen to great advantage.



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34

YAKSHI UNDER A TREE
Red sandstone
2nd–3rd century; from Sanghol, Punjab
102 x 18 x 18 cm
Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Punjab, No. 52–B

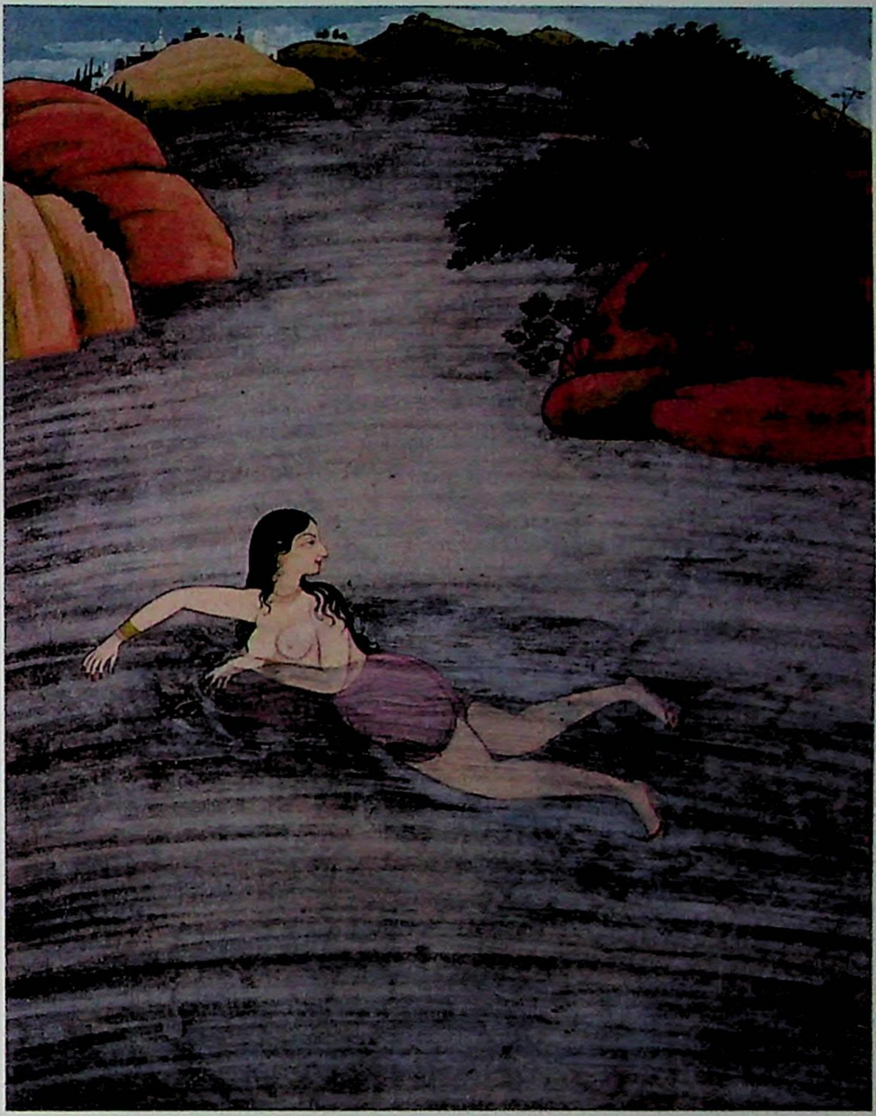
Like so many others of her kind from Mathura and Sanghol, this *yakshi* stands in intimate relationship with a tree. She touches and bends a branch with one hand, as a *shalabhanjika* in the Indian literary and visual tradition always does. There is frank sensuality in the figure but also a reticence. The treatment of the undraped female form, seen here at languorous ease, follows well-established conventions. A sense of delight pervades the figure and informs the sculptor's treatment of it. There is also great delicacy in the details, especially in the treatment of the tree with its finely rendered leaves breathing the same kind of life as does the pulsating sensuous figure of the *yakshi*.

This carved pillar is double-sided: at the back is the figure of another *yakshi*, her right arm beneath and gently touching her breast. In addition to much damage, the figure also suffers from the fact that pronounced yellow streaks in the stone cover large surfaces.

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35

SOHNI, THE BEAUTIFUL ONE, SWIMS ACROSS THE RIVER
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
37 x 29 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 9960



The love legend of Sohni and her lover Mahiwal, the buffalo-herder (really a wealthy merchant who preferred to tend buffaloes to be able to remain within reach of this beauty whom he could not legitimately marry), is one of the best known of the Punjab. Whenever the river Chenab (now in Pakistan) is mentioned, it evokes memories of the two lovers, for nightly Sohni would swim across this noble stream with the aid of an empty earthen pitcher (which acted as a buoy) to meet her clandestine lover. But their love was not to last, for jealousy intervened. As Coomaraswamy noted, "the crisis of the story turns on the discovery of these nightly visits by her family; her brothers substitute for the baked earthen pot one of unbaked clay; and when this melts away in the water, Sohni sinks and drowns."

The Pahari painter does not depict intimations of this tragedy. True, in the wide margin of this leaf, in tiny little boxes, he paints on the one side the figure of an old man seated smoking, signifying the vigilant relatives, and on the other, the lover seated with his buffaloes; but the painting is devoted truly to Sohni of gossamer beauty, as she swims across the river.

The painters of the hills, especially those of the Seu-Nainsukh family whose work this almost certainly is, are celebrated for the idealized female type they created: tender and innocent, unsullied by the world, marked by ineffable grace. Although the painters availed themselves of the stock images and similes employed by the poets of the past, their vision possesses a freshness denied to the tired formulae of poetry. We see that dewlike freshness here. The hint of a smile on Sohni's face, the sharp aquiline features, the clinging strands of hair, her elegant naked form seen to great advantage as she swims, impart an unearthly beauty to the painting. The effect is enhanced further by the eerie expanse of water in the night, the silence barely disturbed by the cautious movement of the arms and legs of the stealthy lover.

Literature

O.C. Gangoly, *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting*, Calcutta, 1926; Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958, No. 116; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, No. 19.

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36

LOVE'S LONGING
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Bagta-Chokha of Deogarh
Patna Museum, Patna, No. 2067

A young *nayika* stands alone on a marble terrace with a carpeted floor, her head slightly turned to the right and shown in true profile, her hands extended above her head with interlocked fingers. The setting is simple; no stock situation from a rhetorical text is indicated. She is meant to be seen as a young, passionate beauty, her whole body suffused with the longing of love.

The painter must have carefully thought out the emphasis in the picture, manipulation of its different elements, to bring out the intense, charged quality of passion that we see in the woman's frame. The high, firm breasts raised still higher by the uplifted arms, the narrow waist seen to great advantage in the two-thirds profile pose, hips that jut from the torso on the other side, the firm disposition of the legs, the feet slightly parted, the fleshy, resilient arms with fingers intertwined in the stance called *karkata*, are all worked out with great care. Following the Deogarh convention, the maiden's face, set between the frame of the arms and turned to the side, is relatively large in proportion, its gaze toward the ground.

The rhythm of the body is emphasized by the disposition of the jewelry and garments. Pearl strands loop and curl around the neck, between the breasts; as they fall across the bare stomach, they sway with the light movement of the arms above the head; a girdle with small bells is slung across the body, low against the hips; the brief bodice, edged at the bottom by a golden band, almost fails to contain the fullness of the *nayika's* breasts. It is through these suggestions and manipulations of the few elements of figure and apparel that the painter succeeds in evoking a complete picture of what seems to be going on in the mind and the body of this elegant young beauty.

The manner of rendering the head, especially the fine stippling that gives it a modeled, rounded effect, points to the hand of the painter Chokha, known for the eroticism with which he was able to invest his female figures.

Literature
See No. 4.

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37

THE HUNCHBACK KUBJA AND KRISHNA
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
On front, top border, in Sanskrit, descriptive label
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 3rd quarter of the 16th century; from an Isarda workshop
20 x 27 cm
Collection of Mr. Gopi Krishna Kanoria, Patna, No. GK 287

An unlikely love is related in the episode of the hunchbacked woman, Kubja's encounter with Krishna in the city of Mathura. As things move inexorably toward the final confrontation between Krishna and Kamsa, the evil king who has set a trap for Krishna in his capital city, there are moments of banter and trivial occurrences as Krishna, his brother Balarama, and their cowherd friends roam the streets of the city. In the course of their stroll, they meet a hunchbacked woman "whose eyes were beautiful but whose back was curved as lightning." A perfumer by profession, Kubja is proceeding towards the king's palace, carrying the choicest perfumes and unguents. Krishna pays attention to Kubja and speaks to her gently, a sensation that she has not had for a long time. Taken by his manner and his radiant beauty, she offers him and his companions all she carries. Suddenly and impulsively, greatly pleased with her, the text says, Krishna reaches out and touches her; taking her chin in his hand, he gives her a quick jerk which makes her hunch disappear. Unbelieving, she regards her erect body and, her heart filled with gratitude and longing for Krishna, she asks him to stay with her. Krishna has other matters to attend, but he promises to return to her chamber, which he does later, and Kubja surrenders herself entirely.

The painter of this sumptuous series from Isarda freely translates the scene of Krishna's encounter with Kubja. Suddenly we see the sky light up with stars, even as an uncertain light looms on the high horizon; a tasseled canopy decorates the entire length of the page; Balarama turns back to share a moment with the *gopas* who stand, much like the two brothers, in taut but lively manner softened by their flowing, curling scarves and looped loincloths. By comparison, Krishna and Balarama are gorgeously dressed, as is Kubja, drawing all attention to themselves, placed on a passionate red ground which fills the space against which the three characters stand sharply etched.

Literature

Karl J. Khandalavala and Jagdish Mittal, "The *Bhagavata* MSS. from Palam and Isarda—A Consideration in Style," *Lalit Kala*, No. 16, 1974; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna*, West Franklin, 1980, pl. 26.

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38

A TEMPTRESS: APSARA FIGURE FROM A BRACKET
Sandstone
11th century; from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
85 x 25 cm
Archaeological Museum, Khajuraho, No. 2307

It is quite remarkable how many of these divine damsels from medieval India, these "women of the gods," succeed in communicating in the fullest measure a sense of femininity, despite all the damage they have suffered over the centuries. So firm is the grip of the sculptor on his medium by the time that this kind of figure came to be carved, so powerful is the image evoked by each element in it that even a small fragment seems to have a life of its own.

This attractive young lady, related to the *shalabhanjikas* of old and still standing under the canopy of a tree, has lost both arms and is disfigured in numerous minor ways, yet seems so complete that one recalls with effort that this is only a fragment. Long-limbed and globular at the same time, the figure invites and encourages close inspection, but also maintains a remarkable poise. The drapery's intricate check and floral bands, the rich jewelry clinging to her form and hanging in luxuriant splendor, the body's flexion, the elongated eyes reaching almost to the ears, all fit perfectly into the ideals of the period. Touches of great delicacy distinguish one figure from another. The sculptor expresses this individuality here, for instance, in the ends of the thin lower garment gathered in front, narrowed into a sharp ridge and treated so as to look like a strand attached to a hook on the bejewelled girdle.

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39
"WHOM EVEN THE SNAKES COULD NOT FRIGHTEN ON THE WAY": THE ABHISARIKA
From a *Rasamanjari* series
On verso, Sanskrit verses; on front, *madhya abhisarika*; in Takri characters on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
24 x 33 cm
Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, No. 383

Speaking of the Indian literature on Shringara, Ananda Coomaraswamy remarked many years ago not only on its extent, but also on its profundity. "One is amazed," he wrote in his *Rajput Painting* (1916), "at the combination of such intimate knowledge of the passions of body and soul with the will to codify and classify." The beginnings of classification of types of lovers, for instance, go back at least to the early centuries of the present era, judging from the *Natyashastra* of Bharata, that great classic on theater, dance, and music. But more and more came to be written on the subject; great elaboration followed over time, classifications led to subclassifications: lover and beloved (*nayaka* and *nayika*) were treated as belonging to an incredible variety of categories, according to their age, experience, station in life, nature, or situation in love. Thus, a beloved or heroine could be very young and uninitiated, moderately knowledgeable, or mature and thus experienced in love; she could be "one's own," "belonging to another," or "as yet undecided"; she could be of superior, middling, or of low disposition, and so on. After a point, it all begins to sound too detailed, perhaps even artificial, but as Coomaraswamy pointed out, it is only artificial in this sense:

> ...that it is the work of very skillful craftsmen using special conventions; on the contrary it is so closely molded on experience that it is only in proportion to the extent of our own experience that we can appreciate its realism.... What is most impressive is that so much knowledge... should be combined with so much tenderness; that such unwearying research should be constantly illumined by the magic of a first kiss.

One of the best known works on this subject is the Sanskrit *Rasamanjari* (A Cluster of Delights) of the fifteenth century poet Bhanudatta, who was born in northern Bihar—a work written, as the poet himself says, for providing aesthetic delight "to the minds of the multitude of scholars, as if it were honey to the bees." Consisting of only 138 verses, the *Rasamanjari* employs a tense, terse style, but its imagery is vivid, once one has succeeded in decoding the meaning of each verse. In order to make subtle variations of mood and sentiment clear, the poet sometimes provides more than one example of a type. The *nayikas* are introduced first in a simple classification, but then things build up, and very soon one is in the rich, poetic world of characteristic signs (*lakshanas*) through which *nayikas* can be recognized. One standard classification that became part of the general

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awareness of everyone in India, not only of readers of rhetorical works, was the eight types of *nayikas* according to their situations in love. Their names in this classification are:

svadhinapatika	She whose lord is subject to her will, in her control.
utka	She who waits and yearns for her lover.
vasakasajja	She who waits for her lover with the bed prepared.
kalahantarita	She who reproached her lover and then is smitten by remorse.
khandita	She who is angry with her lover and remonstrates.
proshitapatika	She whose lover has gone on a journey, and who waits for him.
vipralabdha	She who waits in vain for her lover to come to their appointed place.
abhisarika	She who goes out to meet her lover, and keeps her tryst.

Further subtypes are identified according to age, experience, and nature. But it is truly remarkable how much these eight main types figure in poetry and song, even when it has nothing specific to do with the rhetoric of Shringara literature. Each poet tries to introduce his own refinement into a well-established situation and category; each endeavors to reach toward aesthetic delight in his own way. The men are also classified and described, but with nothing approaching the subtlety and the delight with which the heroine-beloved is examined. However, in virtually every situation, the woman is shown interacting with her lover, the *nayaka*, who is thus examined by implication.

When describing lover and beloved, it was logical for the poets to try to cast them as archetypes integral to the culture, and thus make them at once recognizable. A natural choice in the context of the time was for the lover to be taken as Krishna whose love, with all its innocence, passion, playfulness, and even inconstancy, was something everyone understood and responded to. By implication, the beloved was Radha in most, though not in all, situations. In Hindi poetry, such as that of Keshavadasa, who wrote his famous *Rasikapriya* toward the end of the sixteenth century (modeling himself on the *Rasamanjari*, but going beyond it), the lover and beloved are designated by name as Krishna and Radha virtually throughout the work. This is not the case with Bhanudatta's *Rasamanjari*, in which Krishna is mentioned by name several times, but not in each verse. When visualizing the verses, however, the painters of some of the series found it simpler to present the lover consistently and uniformly as Krishna, thereby not only keeping a continuity, but also introducing overtones and associations with the Krishna myth that each viewer could draw upon.

Verse 76, inscribed at the back of the present painting, describes a beloved of the middling kind, neither a novice nor very mature and experienced. The words are placed in the mouth of the lover, seen as Krishna, who says:

> O my slender beauty, you, whom even the snakes could not frighten on the way, now tremble at the mere touch of my arm. The thunder of the clouds could not shake you, and yet the sound of my words of love makes you turn. What am I to do?

The superb series from which this leaf comes, the first *Rasamanjari* series from Basohli, has been described and discussed at length by W.G. Archer, who comments on its "air of barbarous luxury, its passionate intensity," the many distortions that heighten its "visual poetry." One of the most brilliantly colored series in the whole range of Pahari painting, with its dazzling use of scarlets and crimsons and deep yellows, its greenish-blacks and pale greens and ivories, enhanced in each case by the use of glowing beetle-wing cases which are pasted on to simulate emeralds in jewelry and decoration, it also remains one of those sets in which the painter interprets with remarkable freedom and innovation each situation visualized by the poet. Here, for instance, the beautifully delineated but deadly-looking snake with its forked tongue is placed in such bold isolation that it comes to stand for passion as much as it symbolizes the hazards that the *nayika* encountered while coming to the tryst. The steady downpour of rain, the thick, theatrical-looking stylized clouds, the avid eyes and clear gestures, the human drama going on inside the loggia, fill the air with quiet but insistent passion. The ornamental detail remains subservient to the richness of emotions that are delineated.

The series must once have consisted of more than 130 paintings, each verse with its visual counterpart, but not all have survived. The largest group, sixty-two paintings, is in the Dogra Art Gallery at Jammu; there are several in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and a small group in the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar. The series is not dated, no colophon having been discovered yet, but is generally placed between 1660-1670, and in the little state of Basohli, where it is believed to have been executed.

Literature

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of Indian Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, Part V, Boston, 1926; Hirananda Shastri, *Indian Pictorial Art as Developed in Book Illustration*, Baroda, 1936; Karl J. Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, "The *Rasamanjari* in Basohli Painting," *Lalit Kala*, 3–4, 1956–57, pp. 26–38; Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958; M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting*, New Delhi, 1959; M.S. Randhawa and S.D. Bhambri, "Basohli Paintings of Bhanudatta's *Rasamanjari*," *Roopalekha*, XXXVI:1–2, 1967; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, No. 4 (i to xvi) *s.v.* Basohli.

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40

"TO SET OUT WITH EAGERNESS": THE ABHISARIKA
From the same *Rasamanjari* series as No. 39
On verso, Sanskrit verses; on front, *parakiya abhisarika andhakara* in Takri characters on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
24 x 33 cm
Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, No. 333

The situation is that of setting out to meet the lover, but another, wilder, element is introduced. The beloved here belongs to another *parakiya*; thus she is more daring and defiant. The night is dark, as the last word in the inscription in Takri script informs us; there is even a *sakhi*, a friend who attempts to dissuade her from stepping out in such a storm. But like one possessed, she is not to be held:

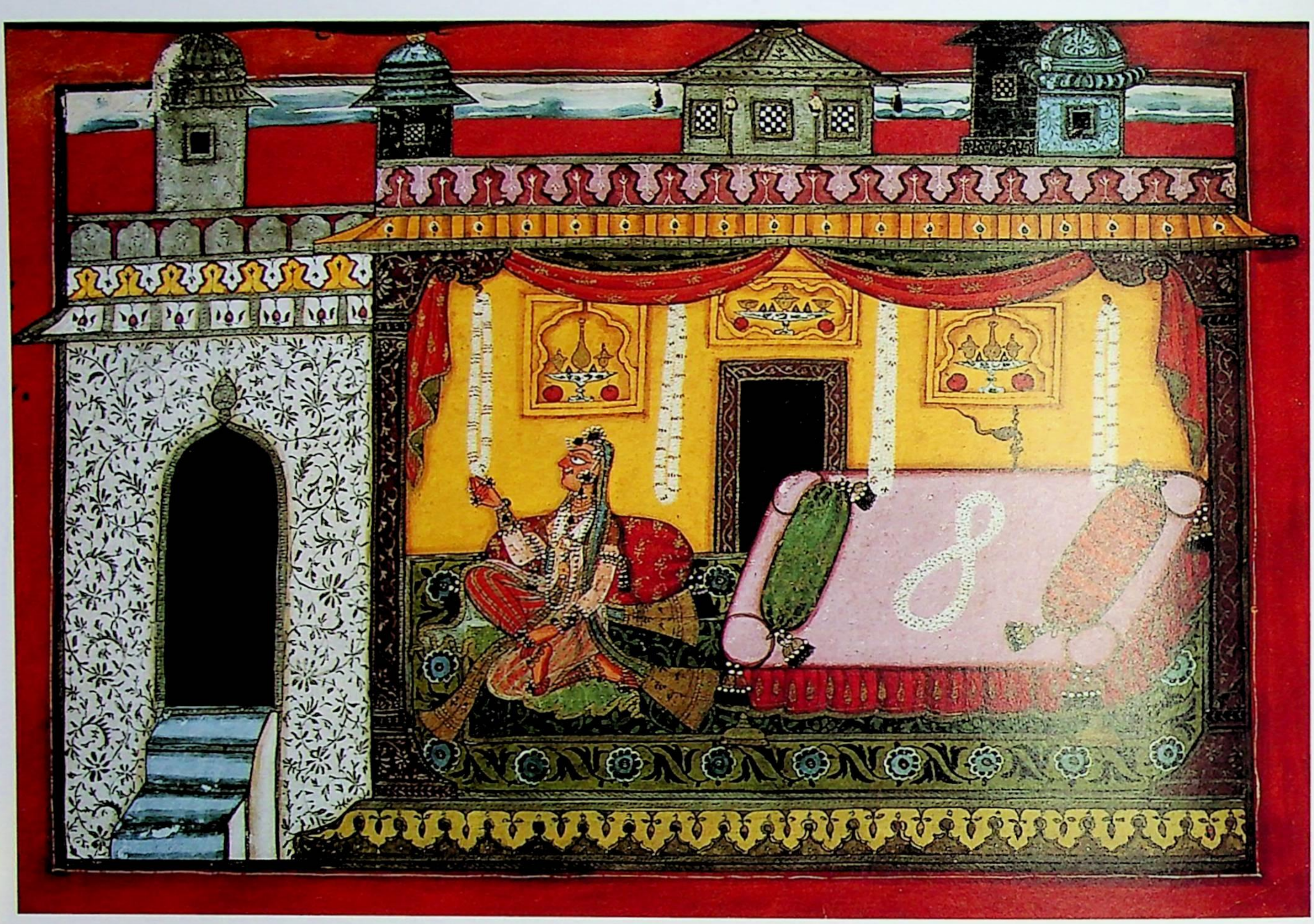
> *Sakhi!* For maidens who are ready to set out with eagerness to meet their sweetheart, even the clouds are like the sun, the night as day, darkness as light, the forest as their own home, and pathless wilderness as smooth paths.

The clouds suspended like a perpetual threat, the lightning which darts through them, the steady rain, establish the unfriendly night; the cluster of trees at the left reveals the lover's head as he waits in the forest; the chamber at right is her house that she is leaving. All these features are indicated briefly but with quiet eloquence; they are treated like stage properties that can be picked up and shifted about at will. The trees in the left foreground, shaped and colored to evoke a general, poetic picture and not to reflect reality, are dwarfed to enable us to see Krishna. Likewise, the doors to buildings may be shown open or closed, and steps are introduced or eliminated to suit the pictorial purpose of the painter. But what results from all these manipulations are magnificent, moving pictures clear in intent and meaning.

Literature
See No. 39.

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41

"SCENTED WITH MUSK AND SANDAL-PASTE": THE VASAKASAJJA

From the same *Rasamanjari* series as No. 39
On verso, Sanskrit; on front, *samanya vasakasajja* in Takri characters on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
24 x 33 cm
Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, No. 385

Bhanudatta describes a courtesan attached to and in love with the *nayaka* whose return she awaits at the side of her decorated, fragrant bed, but her love contains more than physical desire. Her eyes firmly directed at the open door, her extended right hand feeling the moist freshness of one of the flower garlands that hangs from a peg, her dress falling open in front and the ends of her scarf fluttering, she ruminates:

> "When my lover cajoles me to remove my upper garment, I shall ask him for the gift of a new *sari;* when he advances to kiss me, I shall demand a jewelled clasp for my hair; and when he reaches out to touch my bosom, I am going to ask him for a girdle of gold." Thus resolving, the *nayika* scents herself with musk and sandal-paste as she waits, with longing aroused for the blessed moment of union with her lover. (69)

The perfume of musk and sandal-paste that the poet speaks of the painter can suggest only by showing the woman's dress falling open, revealing her anointed bosom. But he suggests a fragrant interior through other means—the use of strands of newly strung garlands, a sign of welcome and a stimulant of desire. The inviting bed with its bolsters, the lamp burning brightly by its side, the raised, parted curtains, are wholly appropriate to the moment and the mood. If decorative detail enters our awareness, it is, once again, with a clear purpose. The flat red ground just visible above the top of the chamber, the yellow of the wall with its painted, decorative niches, are the two prominently even areas of color: everything else is pierced and fretted and painted or embroidered with obsessive attention to detail.

Literature
See No. 39.

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42 BRACE

"LIKE HOLDING QUICKS o, Madhya Pradesh
From the same *Rasamanjar* Khajuraho, No. 14
On verso, Sanskrit verses; o
(navodha) in Takri chara fully intimate work is some-
Gouache on paper mi and Narayana embracing.
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17 y close to each other; the left
workshop his consort's back, emerges
24 x 33 cm to touch and lightly sup-
Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, es not look at her directly;
no overt communication.

Mugdha, the rhetoricians all. Face lifted toward him,
resolved to worship her lor gazes at him in quiet rap-
moment with all the rituals roticism is much in evi-
have all the tremulousness of Khajuraho temples, but
face the radiance of the moon same time no nuance of
inexperienced or newly wedded lptor.
a certain shyness, a nameless fear of me grace and
is how the coming together of eager lover and timid
heroine is described by a friend:

> Drawn gently to the bed and locked in loving arms, the new bride out of modesty struggles to free herself. It seems as if only such a lover can hold her who can take quick silver on the palm of his hand, and keep it there, steady.

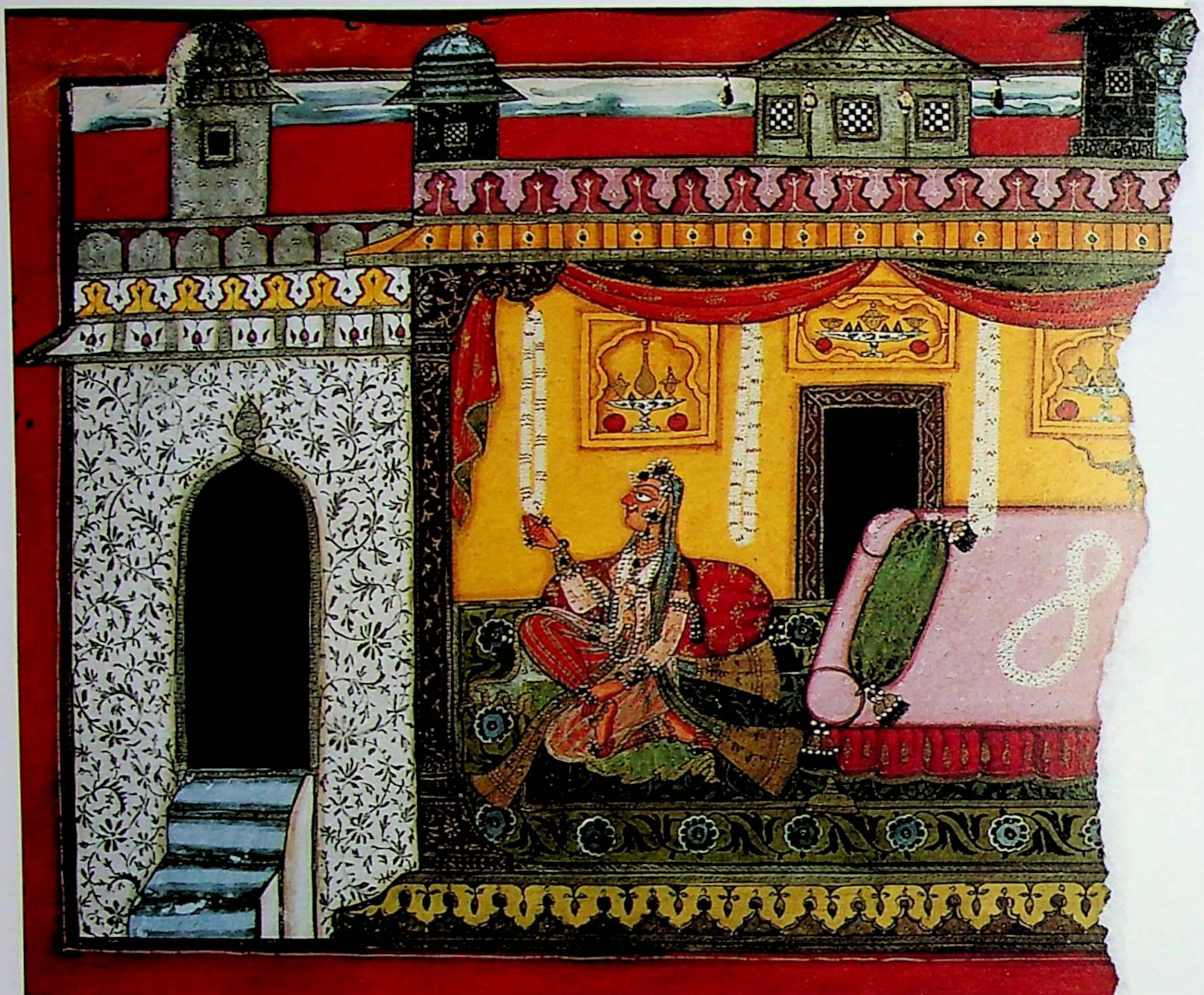
In the standard commentaries on the *Rasamanjari*, the words are interpreted as being uttered by the lover

in the final analysis, everything is subordinated to facial expression, their peace and quiet a delicate state of intellectual and sensual rapture. The artist is in full control of the rhythms he generates. There are points when it seems ... of quicksilver, she finds it difficult to ... carried away, as is intense, and the painter draws attention to the ... ately forcefully, emphasizing it by the passionate red of the bedspread which sets off the bluish-grey of the wall and the dark blue of Krishna's body.

Literature
See No. 39.

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41

"SCENTED WITH MUSK AND SANDAL-PASTE": THE VASAKASAJJA

From the same *Rasamanjari* series as No. 39
On verso, Sanskrit; on front, *samanya vasakasajja* in Takri characters on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
24 x 33 cm
Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, No. 385

Bhanudatta describes a courtesan attached to and in love with the *nayaka* whose return she awaits at the side of her decorated, fragrant bed, but her love contains more than physical desire. Her eyes firmly directed at the open door, her extended right hand feeling the moist freshness of one of the flower garlands that hangs f

in front and

rum... useum, New Delhi, No. 51.207/23

In this wonderfully delicate and sensitive work, the painter captures a moment of great tenderness and imparts to it an air of universality, of being beyond time. The setting for the coming together of the divine lovers, both nude but rendered with marked

ask him for a girdle of go
nayika scents herself with
paste as she waits, with lo
blessed moment of union

The perfume of musk and
poet speaks of the painter ca
showing the woman's dress
anointed bosom. But he su
through other means—the
strung garlands, a sign of
desire. The inviting bed w
burning brightly by its sid
curtains, are wholly appr
the mood. If decorative ... this setting, as Krishna is, once again, with Radha gently, she seems to lose ground just visibl... yes slightly downcast, she extends an yellow of ... arm to the cushions at the back, as if trying to steady herself in this upsurge of quiet passion. The pair are locked together like cloud and lightning, the painter seems to say: he dark, she of fair complexion, he patient and "deep," she impetuous and brilliant. No words are spoken; no text is needed to interpret the situation. It is as if all that needs to be stated has been stated, in perfect terms.

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44

DIVINE COUPLE IN EMBRACE
Sandstone
11th century; from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
65 x 55 cm
Archaeological Museum, Khajuraho, No. 14

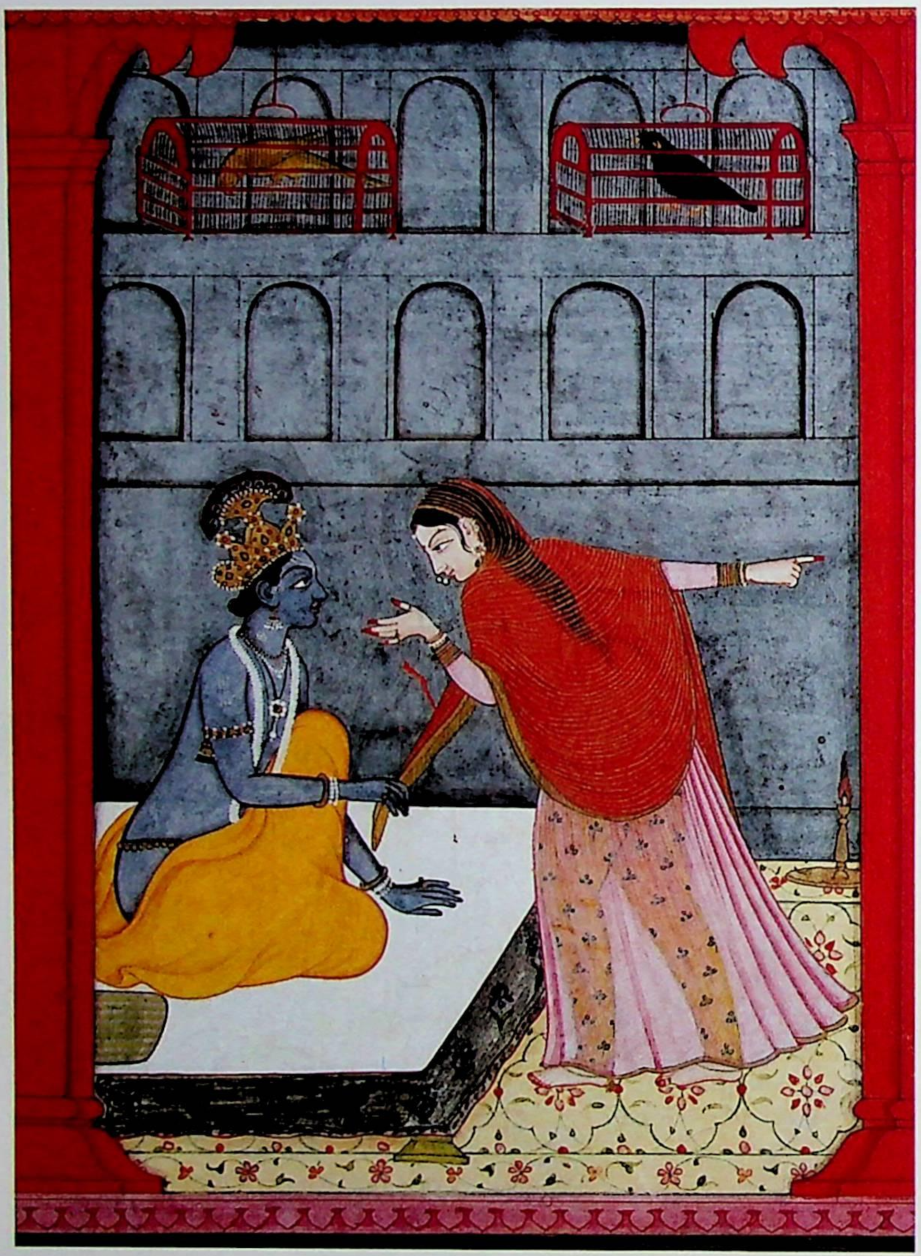
This broken but wonderfully intimate work is sometimes identified as Lakshmi and Narayana embracing. The two figures stay very close to each other; the left arm of the deity, around his consort's back, emerges from beneath her left arm to touch and lightly support her breast. But he does not look at her directly; there is no locking of eyes, no overt communication. Rather, the posture says it all. Face lifted toward him, body arching and bent she gazes at him in quiet rapture. The mood, the overt eroticism is much in evidence on the walls and inside Khajuraho temples, but much more restrained. At the same time no nuance of intimacy is overlooked by the sculptor.

The forms are imbued with the same grace and suppleness that mark the work of the Chandella master of this period. The smooth and beautifully interlocking planes are deftly handled, the fleshy surfaces are emphasized by a profusion of delicate jewelry that adorns the bodies of the divine lovers. Attention to little details—the fold in the flesh under the breasts, the depth of the navel, the slight constriction from the male's tight girdle—are touches of great delicacy. But in the final analysis, everything is subordinated to facial expression, their peace and quiet a delicate state of intellectual and sensual rapture. The artist is in full control of the rhythms he generates. There are points when it seems as if he is about to be carried away, as is often true elsewhere in Khajuraho, but he ultimately surprises us with a fine sense of balance and restraint.

Literature

Mario Bussagli and C. Sivaramamurti, *5000 Years of the Art of India*, New York, 1978, No. 251; Marguerite Marie Deneck, *Indian Art*, London, 1967, pl. 25.

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45

THE CAGE OF LOVE
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century
18 x 13.5 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 5454

Always intent on inventing new situations, playful or passionate, a poet like Keshavadasa, author of the sixteenth century classics *Rasikapriya* and *Kavipriya*, must have been seen by the painters as a perennial source to draw upon. Even though this painting showing the familiar loving pair of Krishna and Radha bears no inscription, a *rasika*, one steeped alike in the poetry and painting of this rich period, would find little difficulty in connecting it with a verse of Keshava in which he speaks of the cleverness of Radha. Krishna, eager as always, draws Radha to him, holding her veil as he sits on the bed, a wrap barely covering his nakedness. But Radha, teasingly, invents excuses of all kinds: "Do not be impatient, love," she tells him. "Only the parrot has gone off to sleep; the myna is still awake and the door remains to be closed." Krishna understands and smiles: "Radha is learning all the little tricks of love," the poet says.

While the painting could be seen as a literal rendering of the situation envisioned by the painter, it is also possible to enjoy it at a purely visual level. The situation can be grasped rather quickly: the eagerness on the part of Krishna, the delaying tactics of Radha, the little details that fit into the context of love, such as the daintily made bed, the undress of Krishna, the smile that playfully bounces back and forth between the lovers; more than this, the feeling of togetherness and the mellifluous grace of the line make this delicate work come to life.

Literature

Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958; *Bharat Kala Bhavan Ka Suchipatra*, Varanasi, 1945, No. 32.

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47

PLAYING TO DELIGHT HER HEART
From the same *Gita Govinda* series as no. 46
On verso, Sanskrit verse
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1730; by Manaku
21 x 30.7 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. I.71

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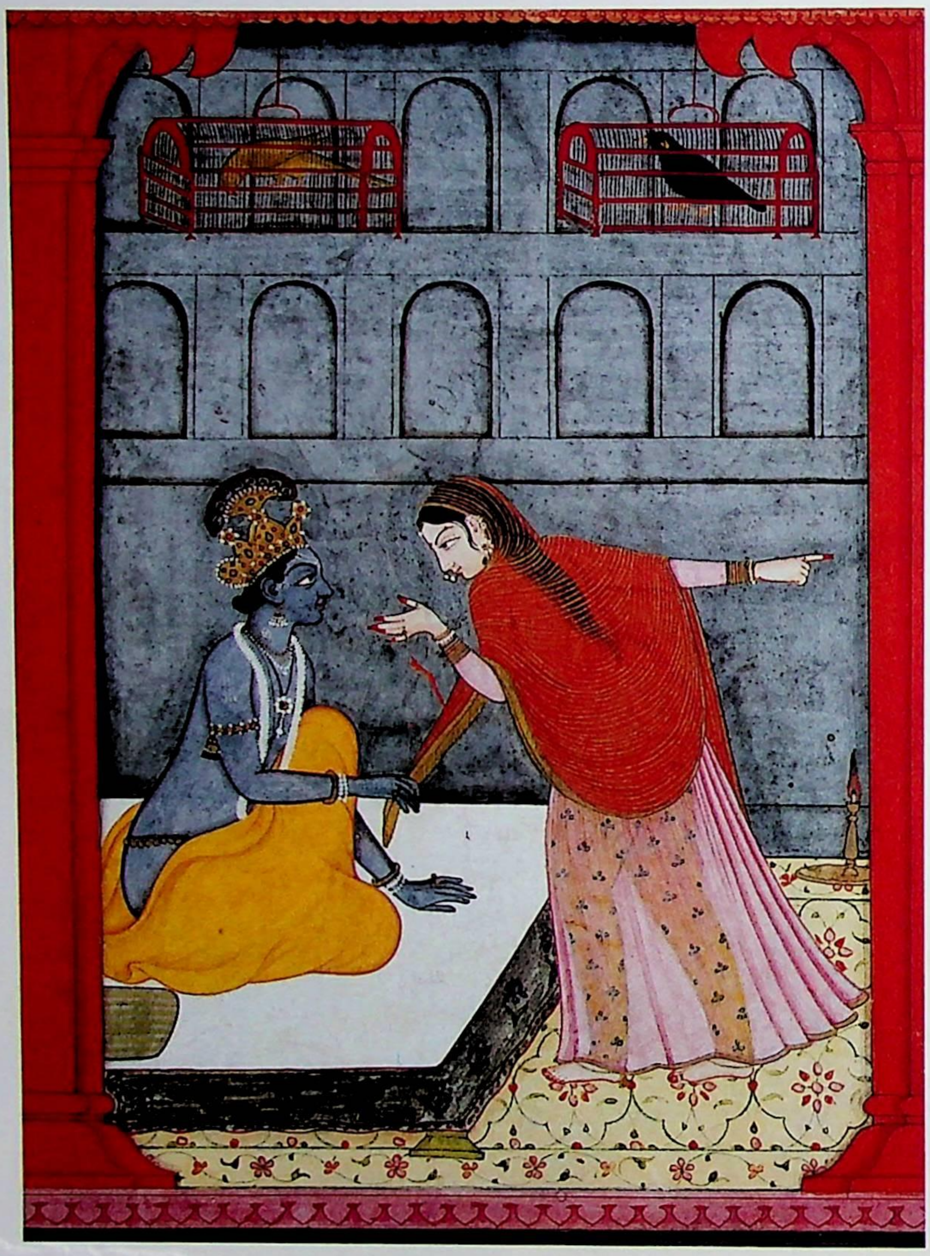
The *Gita Govinda*, the great dramatic love lyric of Jayadeva, who describes himself at its beginning as "wandering king of bards . . . obsessed in his heart by the rhythms of the Goddess of Speech," has through the centuries inspired magnificent expressions in the arts of India, for few dancers, musicians, painters, or commentators have been able to resist its rhythms. This work of erotic mysticism, which sings with such abandon of "the secret passions of Radha and Krishna (that) triumph on the bank of the Yamuna," offered especially rich opportunity to painters.At least three major series of paintings of the *Gita Govinda* from the Pahari area alone survived. In many ways, this earliest series from the hills comes closest to capturing the erotic mood and sacred truth of the lyric, balancing finely these two seemingly opposed elements. In leaf after leaf Manaku, the painter, evokes Jayadeva's sweet, soft, lyrical songs, face," or will "hang earrings on the magic circles of her ears to form snares for love," and "dr[illegible] glossier than a swarm of bla[illegible] the painter [illegible] the verses and creates visual parallels [illegible] them, matching detail with detail, nuance with nuance.

Manaku here presents Canto XII of the poem, when doubt, entreaties, remonstrances, and the pain of separation are past, settled like dust after a shower of rain. The lovers are together, she urged by her friends "by the war drum of [her] changing girdle [to] meet his rich mood without shame," and he, ardent as ever, comes "like spring winds, bearing honey." The bouts of passion are described at length in this Canto; the verse inscribed on the painting's verso is a variant of one found in most editions of the text and speaks of "boundless bliss having interrupted the battle of love's subtle art." But the mood is a continuation of that in Canto XI:

> His body hair bristled to the art of her sensual play,
> Gleaming jewels ornamented his graceful form.
> She saw her passion reach the soul of Hari's mood,
> The weight of joy stained his face. . . .
> (XI.30)

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47

PLAYING TO DELIGHT HER HEART
From the same *Gita Govinda* series as no. 46
On verso, Sanskrit verse
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1730; by Manaku
21 x 30.7 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. I–60

Gurukul Kangri University HARDWAR

Radha, secure in her power over Krishna, wants him to ornament her, as "he idled after passionate love":

> Yadava hero, your hand is cooler than
> sandal-balm on my breast;
> Paint a leaf design with deer-musk here on
> Love's ritual vessel!
>
> (XII.12)

And the Yadava hero, "playing to delight her heart," does precisely this. On the very bed of leaves that has just seen their joyous love-play, the two sit very close, she in his lap but now dressed, holding in her right hand the bowl of liquid deer-musk, colorful and fragrant; and he, holding a thin brush in his left hand, proceeds to paint her breast with the leaf design she desires.

Such works of wonderful delicacy and tenderness abound in this series. In other leaves, he will "pin back the teasing lock of hair on her smooth lotus-face," or will "hang earrings on the magic circles of her ears to form snares for love," and "draw kohl glossier than a swarm of black bees on her eyes." In the series the painter varies the settings at will, even when, in the poem, it remains the same forest clearing: trees are increased or reduced in size, flowering bushes are introduced or removed, the moon appears and disappears. What remains constant is passion.

Literature
See No. 46.

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48

WHEN SPRING'S MOOD IS RICH
From the same *Gita Govinda* series as No. 46
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1730; by Manaku of Guler
21 x 30 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. I–53

When spring's mood is rich, and "budding mango trees tremble from the embrace of rising vines," the forest in Vrindavan witnesses "the wondrous mystery of Krishna's sexual play." There he revels in many women's embraces:

> He hugs one, he kisses another, he caresses
> another dark beauty,
> He stares at one's suggestive smiles, he mimics a
> wilful girl.
> Hari [Krishna] revels here as the crowd of
> charming girls
> Revels in seducing him to play.
>
> (I.44)

Krishna's inconstancy has troubled later commentators and righteous devotees much as it troubled Radha. But Jayadeva sees it all as an integral part of Krishna's nature (*lila*), for it is he who quickens all things, and he whose "soft black sinuous lotus limbs begin the festival of love" everywhere.

Being accustomed to seeing the same figures more than once within the same frame, one is inclined at first to see here successive episodes in the lovemaking of Radha and Krishna. The couple seems to appear three times and then, finally, Radha walks away at the extreme left. The faces and the bodies of the women are strikingly similar, answering to the ideal, passionate type created by Manaku, but their dresses vary, revealing that they are in fact different. With great subtlety, and with his usual dazzling handling of color, the painter gives them different combinations of skirt and *orhani* (a brief sarilike wrap). Thus it is Krishna who appears three times, but not Radha. Meanwhile, the colors and the glistening green-black beetle-wing cases, used to indicate emeralds in the ornaments worn by Krishna and the women, create a riot in this grove.

Literature
See No. 46.

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49

WAITING FOR KRISHNA IN THE SPRING
From a *Gita Govinda* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd or 4th quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
17 x 26.5 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benares, No. 10514

As the great devotee-poet says, "The wondrous mystery of Krishna's erotic play in the Brindaban forest is Jayadeva's song," the *Gita Govinda*. But Krishna is not with his beloveds all the time: if there is joyous union, there is also the anticipation of union when, at the coming of spring, "tender-limbed Radha wandered like a flowering creeper in the forest wilderness seeking Krishna in his many haunts."

Here Radha is seated in a grove on the bank of the Yamuna that flows at the edge of the forest. A companion (*sakhi*) stands by her side conversing, but both the women are far more intent upon seeing the beauty of spring, "The crying sounds of cuckoos mating on mango shoots/ Shaken as bees seek honey-scents of opening buds/ Raise fever in the ears of lonely travellers. . . ." Perhaps the two also pause to listen to a sound that just might be the footfalls of Krishna. The painter of this brilliant series does not depict the birds mating: they are all present, but slightly distanced from each other, even as Radha and Krishna are. The loving manner in which the creeper at the bottom of the page twines around the trunk of a low tree, the lush greenery, the flowers that blossom in a riot of color, are all brought in with clear purpose. In this series, the painter is able perfectly to match the imagery and the rich resonance of Jayadeva's lyric, written some six hundred years before his time.

This *Gita Govinda* series, with nearly 140 surviving leaves, formerly in the collection of the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal, is among the best-loved series in the whole range of Pahari painting. Clearly the work of a member of the Seu-Nainsukh family that originated in Guler—W.G. Archer ascribes it to Khushala, Nainsukh's nephew, assisted by his cousin or Gaudhu, Nainsukh's son—it is generally seen as having been produced in Kangra where Sansar Chand, its most famous ruler, maintained a large atelier consisting of some of the most gifted members of the artist-families of the Pahari area.

Literature

Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958; M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings of the Gita Govinda*, New Delhi, 1963; B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg*, XXI:4, September, 1968; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, pp. 291–293.

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50

THE MAIDEN AND THE ANTELOPE
Gouache on paper
1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Sawar workshop
27.5 x 21.5 cm
Collection of Mr. Gopi Krishna Kanoria, Patna,
No. GK 196

Some of the elements in this painting recall representations of the *ragini todi*: the weeping willow, the antelope, the solitary maiden out in the open. But the mood of playful flirtation here is entirely different. Elegantly attired in the mode of a Mughal princess, wearing the prominent turban and a *peshwaz* (Coomaraswamy used to call it a high-breasted "Empire gown") falling open in front, the young woman holds up one end of her flaring skirt and turns back to look at an antelope who seems to be running fondly after her. One sees the scene as a kind of game being played with a pet, but it may hold a different meaning. According to Gopi Krishna Kanoria, the antelope possibly symbolizes a whole band of young gallants who, desperately in love with the *nayika*, pursue her wherever she goes. Aware of her own charms and their eagerness, she sports with their feelings, leading them on but then making light of them. In any case, the flutter in the air is quite remarkable; other elements—clouds, lotus pond—also build an amorous, sportive mood.

The painter delights in the form of the woman, seeing her as being on the threshold of youth. A couplet of the seventeenth century poet Bihari describes a young maiden no longer in childhood, but not yet adult, "... two different colors thus mixing in her but also separately visible, as in shot silk." Perhaps the painter had in mind such a youthful *nayika* while painting this work. The look of teasing innocence on her face, the eager gaze of the antelope and his prancing step, combine well with the rhythm of the lines in this simple but elegant work that leaves enough room for the eye to take in everything in a gentle, leisurely fashion.

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51

REUNION ON A MOONLIT NIGHT
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
3rd or last quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
28 x 36 cm
Collection of Mr. Gopi Krishna Kanoria, Patna, No. VK 119

The reappearance of Krishna, beloved of the *gopis*, on this dazzling moonlit night is cause for joyous celebration. The pain of separation when he disappeared briefly from their midst, heightening their longing for him and humbling their pride, is now all but forgotten on his return. The *gopis* react differently to their lord's reappearance: some cling "like creepers to a tree"; some reach to touch him, as if to make sure he is real; others "rub their sandal-besmeared bosoms" against his body. They break into loud celebratory song, or regard him with love and disbelief from a slight distance. The sadness on the faces of some has not quite left, and because he sees its lingering traces, Krishna stretches his arm and touches them reassuringly.

The trees and the creepers in the forest on this cool, sandy bank of the Yamuna re-enact and echo the human drama. Knowingly and with great tenderness, they embrace and lean against each other. The little vignette of the village in the distance, glistening in the moonlight, is but a reminder of the homes that these *gopis*—individual souls in search of the Absolute—have left behind in their love for Krishna. The painter seems perfectly to understand the meaning of this reunion at all its levels.

This limpid understanding informs the entire series, justly regarded as rivaling the famous *Gita Govinda* (No. 49), and is counted among "the greatest achievements of painters" in the Pahari area. Books Ten and Eleven of the text of the *Bhagavata Purana* are concerned with Krishna's earthly career, his birth and childhood, his growing up with the cowherds

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and milkmaids, and his great and abiding love for the *gopis*. The books also treat his destruction of many demons including the evil Kamsa, and his later life as a great king at Dwarka. Episodes selected by the poet afford the painter wonderful dramatic opportunities interspersed with long passages of quiet tenderness and beauty, as here. Especially poetic in their feeling are the paintings that treat of the great *raasa* of Krishna with the *gopis* and the episodes that precede it, regarded by many scholars as having been done by an even greater master than the one responsible for the rest of the series; he is called the "Master of the Moonlight," referring to the moonlit nights which form the near-perfect setting for this mystical love-play of Krishna's, this landscape endowed with flowery lushness and eerie pallor.

There was a time when the series was ascribed to the artist Purkhu from a Kanora family, but it is now generally agreed that the work is by members of the greatly gifted Seu-Nainsukh family that originated in Guler. No colophon has survived; hence, it is not easy to name a specific artist for the series, even though Goudhu, Nainsukh's son, or Khushala, son of Manaku, are sometimes mentioned.

The series, when finished, must have been very extensive ("perhaps comprising over one hundred paintings," as Archer says), but not all have survived. A large number of leaves were once in the collection of Mr. Jagmohandas Modi (leading to its being sometimes described as the Modi *Bhagavata*) but they are now widely dispersed over private and public collections.

Literature

A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of the Indian Collection in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, V, Boston, 1926; Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958; W.G. Archer, *The Loves of Krishna in Indian Painting and Poetry*, London, 1957; M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings of the Bhagavata Purana*, New Delhi, 1960; B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg*, XXI:4, September, 1968; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, 1, London, 1973, pp. 293–295.

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52

A YAKSHI
Sandstone
11th century; from Gyaraspur, Madhya Pradesh
46 x 18 x 18 cm
State Archaeological Museum, Gwalior, No. 87

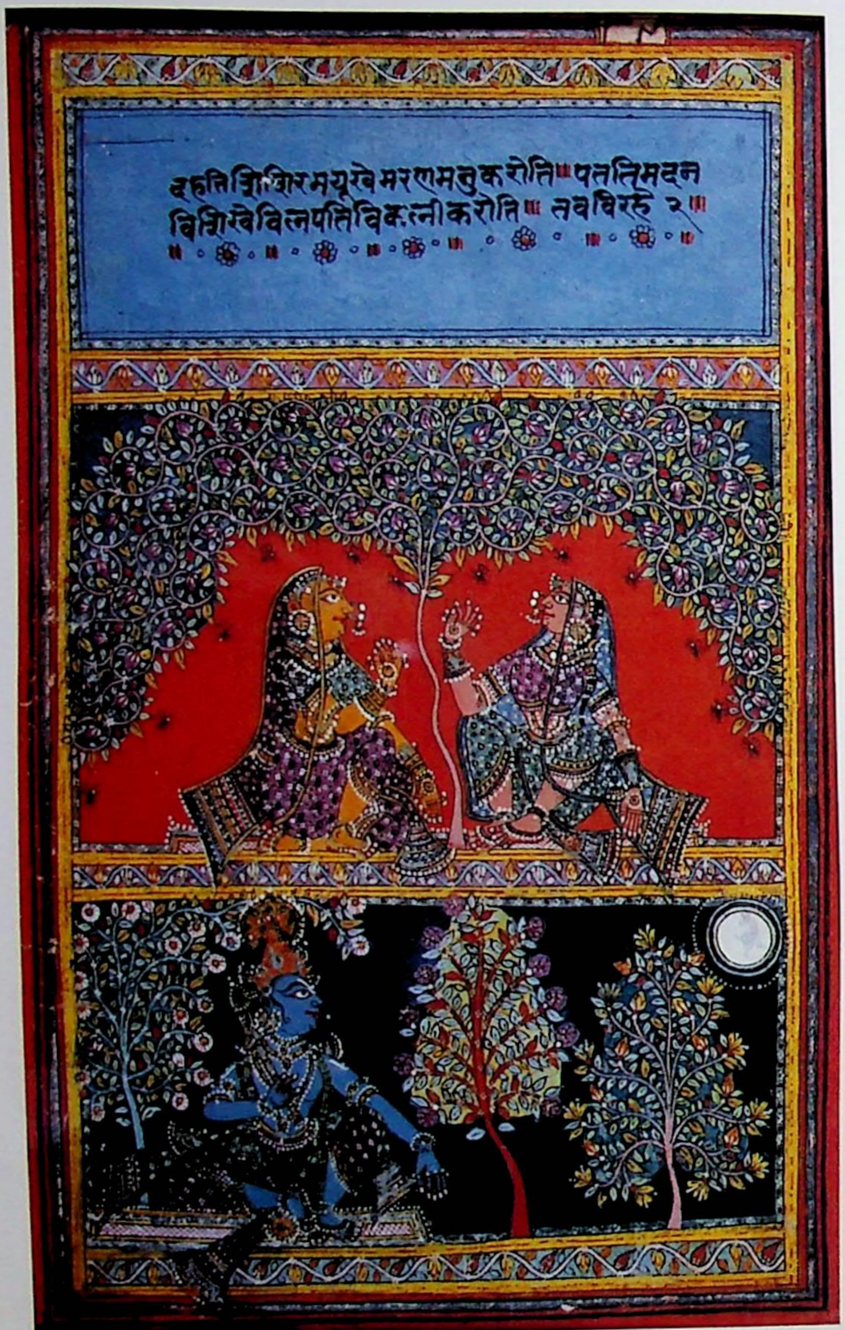


If there is anything to the highly poetic Indian legend of *ashoka dohada*, the *ashoka* tree that aches to be touched by the foot of a fair woman so that it can burst into bloom, it must be a young lady of this description for whom the tree yearns. This figure of surpassing grace and elegance, falling in the general category of *yakshis* or *vrikshakas* and charged with suggestions of eroticism and fertility, epitomizes the delight which the sculptor of medieval India took in the female form. The upper figure is nude, revealing perfectly formed full breasts set close, conforming to Indian ideals. The slightly attenuated waist with its sensitive modeling and its deep navel is barely clothed, and the head, tilted to one side as the figure stands in graceful *tribhanga* flexion, is topped by an exquisite and intricate coiffure. Areas of bare flesh are set off by elaborate, finely worked strands of pearls and precious stones that cover her neck and hang down along the breasts, one of them reaching well below the navel like some golden crocodile sneaking toward sunbaked mounds. But above all, it is the expression on the face, with its arched eyebrows, elongated eyes, and a smile lighting up the areas of the mouth, that gives her entire being a quiet, gentle, mildly provocative air. The arms and the legs are broken, but clearly her left arm must have reached for the branch of a tree, some part of which can still be seen. This lady evidently comes from some religious monument, and if all her allurements do not seem to suit a religious establishment, Ananda Coomaraswamy did not think so: for him, the conjunction of religious ideas with such "emblems of abundance" reveals "an essential purity of spirit that has at all times preserved the East from any psychological disasters that have overtaken the West."

Literature

S.R. Thakore, *Catalogue of Sculptures in the Archaeological Museum, Gwalior*, Bhopal, n.d.; Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, London, 1955, pl. 119; *Ancient Sculptures of India*, 1984, No. 69.

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53

"COOL MOON RAYS SCORCH HIM"
From a *Gita Govinda* series
On top register, verse in Sanskrit
Gouache on paper
Orissa, 3rd quarter of the 18th century
24.4 x 17.5 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.499

The Sanskrit verse in the top panel, taken from the fifth part of Jayadeva's great love lyric, clearly identifies the situation. A *sakhi*, companion and confidante, pleads with Radha on Krishna's behalf. He sends her as his own messenger, beseeching her to repeat his words to the beloved. "Speak to her," he charges her, "of my desolation when separated from her":

> Cool moon rays scorch him,
> Threatening death,
> Love's arrow falls
> And he laments his weakness.
>
> Wild flower-garlanded Krishna
> Suffers in your desertion, friend.

This is precisely what the *sakhi* seems to be doing in the top register with its red background. The lower register visualizes the situation to which she is drawing attention: Krishna seated all alone in a grove in the forest, scorched by the rays of the full moon in the sky. In many respects this series is unusual, for it does not exploit the dramatic possibilities that Jayadeva's poem offers, something that the painter in Rajasthan and in the Pahari area did with brilliant effect. The painter of this series consistently uses a flat background of rich colors in each register and thus creates tableaux of a kind. But static and rigid as all this initially looks, the surfaces have a different kind of rhythm. For example, the creeper with the slender stem in the top register demonstrates what the painter can do with a simple motif. The effect is to capture the poetry of the situation through these devices. There is in addition the sinuous line always at the command of the painter from Orissa: his ability to turn and bend forms, well within the conventions of his style but always containing little twists of surprise. These pages look over-ornamented but the flat background moderates this effect.

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KRISHNA TICKLES RADHA AWAKE
On front, verses in Hindi on three sides
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Deogarh workshop
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 63.1782

Although characteristic of the mood of strong eroticism that many Deogarh works possess, this painting does not seem to be by either of the two best-known masters from that center. All the same, there is much passion and feeling here. Radha is asleep on a soft, comfortable-looking bed on a marble terrace under the sky. At the foot and side of her bed are two maids who have also dozed off and are unaware of the arrival of Krishna. The scene depicts the statement in the verses that the fatigue of last night, exertion obviously from bouts of passionate love-making, has brought drowsiness in mid-day. But Krishna is as alert as ever. Stealing up to Radha's house, he finds her asleep, but is not deterred from his ardent course. Not wanting to startle or frighten her, he takes his flute in his hand and tickles Radha gently on her bare body.

By depicting the supine, relaxed figure of Radha as she turns her head to the side and rests it on the crook of her right arm, the painter allows us a glimpse of her firm, supple body. The veil has slipped from her breasts, and the locks of hair that might have provided another cover are caught under her form. The painter exploits the situation to the full. The sweeping manner in which Radha's loosened garments are rendered is matched by the unexpected angle at which Krishna's form is bent.

The three verses that frame the picture on the margins seem to be an afterthought; all contain much the same sentiment. It is doubtful that they inspired the painting; we may be looking at a reversal of the usual situation—the painting may have prompted the verses. Perhaps they are in the hand of a former owner of this folio.

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55

RADHA MAKES EXCUSES
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, last quarter of the 18th century; from a Kishangarh workshop
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 63.797

A viewer steeped in the poetry and painting of this rich period would find little difficulty in connecting this painting with a verse of the poet Keshava, in which he speaks of the cleverness of Radha. Here, Radha, shy and abashed, tries to blunt the edge of Krishna's impatience. As he reaches out to pull her toward him, she makes elaborate excuses: the moment is not yet appropriate; the two birds are not asleep yet; the pet deer and cranes have to be taken out; the door needs to be barred, and so on. "Seeing her cleverness," says the poet Keshavadasa, "Krishna smiles."

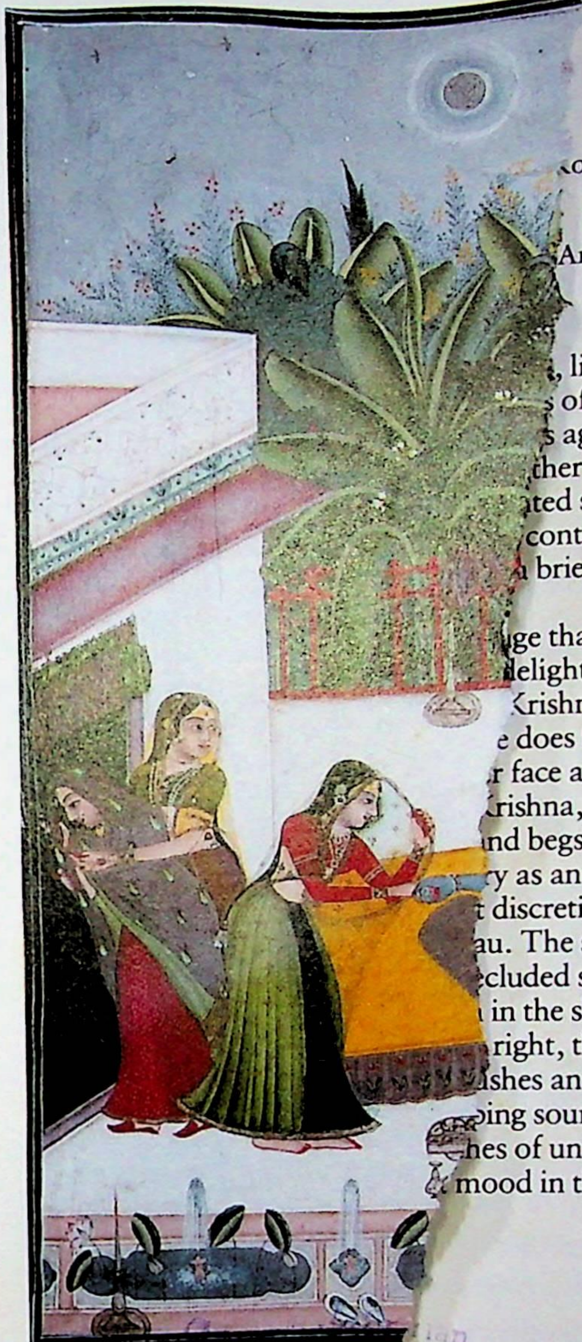
Much of the delicacy and stylization that one associates with painting at Kishangarh in the eighteenth century is here. It is interesting to compare this visualization with that of the Pahari painter (No. 45) and see how the same verse gives rise to two entirely different pictures, truly far from each other in setting and mood. The setting here is a terrace, not the inside of a chamber as in the case of the Pahari work; the placing of the animals and birds is markedly different; there is an emphasis on the effect of night suggested by the dark and the rendering of the moon in the sky; and a romantic hint in the form of a pleasure-boat stationed over the waters in the distance is introduced. But, with all its refinement, the painting is lacking in its understanding of the situation. It certainly does not possess the intimacy or the sense of urgency that we see in the Pahari work. Here the entire situation is viewed from a distance as it were and the gestures take on the character of elaborately studied rituals, whereas the Pahari picture of this theme has greater warmth and a sense of immediacy. The lovers in it remain ideal, but they are also more real than the stylized, somewhat self-conscious pair in this Kishangarh work.

Literature

Eric Dickinson and Karl Khandalavala, *Kishangarh Painting*, New Delhi, 1959; Karl Khandalavala, *Kishangarh Painting*, Lalit Kala Portfolio, New Delhi, 1959; Faiyaz Ali Khan, "The Painters of Kishangarh," *Roopalekha*, LI, Nos. 1–2.

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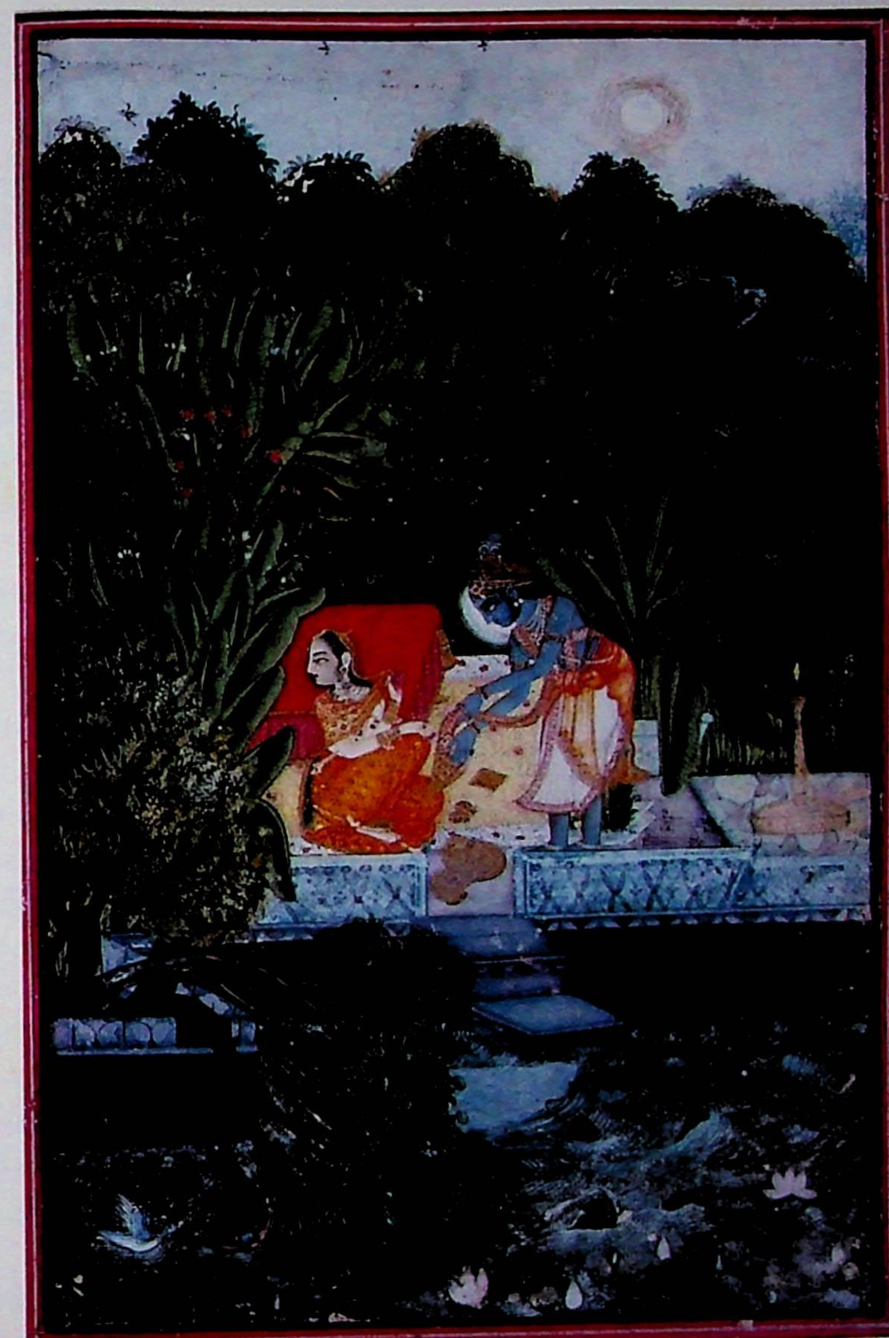


Kota

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Gurukul Kangri University
HARDWAR

56

RADHA APPROACHES KRI
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 2nd quarter of th
Kota workshop
30.2 x 38 cm
Prince of Wales Museum, Bo

There is a special delight that t... the poet, takes in rendering the ... between lover and beloved. The idea of the timid an... shy heroine figures prominently in the classification of heroes and heroines, the contrast between the eagerness of the lover and the hesitation of the new bride being frequently depicted. But the situation here does not seem to be a straightforward rendering of such a heroine. Apparently a harmless trick is being played upon Krishna, who sits on his large, beautiful bed on a moonlit terrace. He is all eagerness and avidity. But

cism that never seems to ... this style when they address themse... subject.

Literature

Pramod Chandra, *Bundi Painting*, New Delhi, 1959; Milo C. Beach, *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota*, Ascona, 1974.

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55

RADHA MAK TCHES RADHA DRESSING
Gouache on pa per
Rajasthan, last quarter of the 18th century; from a Bundi-
Kishangarh op
National Muse m, New Delhi, No. 56.35/19

A viewer steep a special moment in romantic love,
rich period wc meeting of their eyes. There is also
this painting w he occasion when the lover or the
which he speak the other unaware. Here the heroine
Radha, shy anc d her bath and is being helped by a
of Krishna's imp s clothes from inside and stands close
her toward him, has just draped herself loosely in a
moment is not ye which conceals nothing, and is
not asleep yet; th rt. At that precise moment the
taken out; the do house next door, chances to lift
"Seeing her clever om a window on the upper story
"Krishna smiles." pse of the beauty of his beloved.
Much of the de on to peep, but the accident
associates with pa ce and love takes root in the
eighteenth century
this visualization wi tively simple: the tiled courtyard
(No. 45) and see hov e where she feels safe taking an
entirely different pic wooden stool is at the left; a
setting and mood. T in the wall at the back through
the inside of a chamb cluster of plantain trees are
work; the placing of g far above the wall. But the
edly different; there ne is the human exchange that
of night suggested b expectedly: from it, many
the moon in the sky Bundi painter draws his
of a pleasure-boat st le assurance, imparting to the
distance is introduced look of great innocence and
the painting is lacking f white are brought in with
situation. It certainly de erve to throw the bright,
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Literature

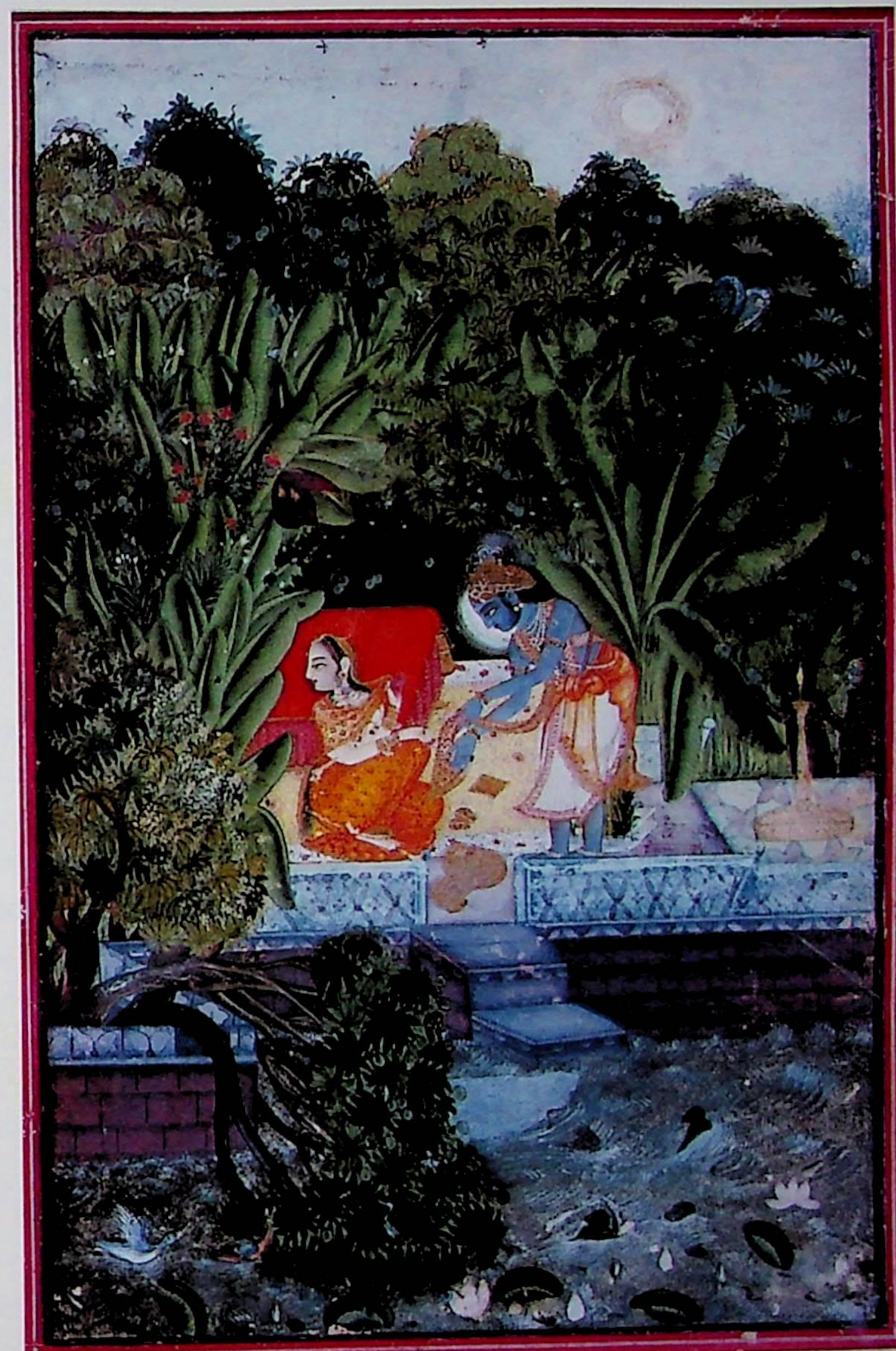
Eric Dickinson and Karl K
Kishangarh Painting, New I
Khandalavala, *Kishangarh I*
Portfolio, New Delhi, 1959;
Painters of Kishangarh," P

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58

THE OFFENDED MISTRESS
From a *Rasikapriya* series
Gouache on paper
3rd quarter of the 18th century; from a Bundi-Kota workshop
25.1 x 15.5 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.139



Despite the intense love she bears Krishna, like any other *nayika* Radha also sometimes takes offense. A mistress (*manini*) can hold many things against the lover: the attention he pays to "the other one," the fact that he arrives late at the appointed spot, a chance remark, and so on. But in the context of great, deep-seated love, it remains but a brief episode which intensifies feelings of love.

In the midst of that lush, dense foliage that the painter of Bundi and Kota took such delight in painting, Radha has been waiting for Krishna with the bed of love prepared; but when he does finally arrive, she shows her anger, turns her face away and makes no attempt at conversation. Krishna, always ardent, plays the role to perfection and begs and cajoles, perhaps weaves a whole story as an excuse. The little drama is played with great discretion. The still figures appear frozen in a tableau. The setting is perfect for their love play: a dark, secluded spot, the time of night indicated by the moon in the sky and the lighted candle on its stand at the right, the perfumed air suggested by flowering bushes and ripened mangoes on the trees, the quiet lapping sounds of water, a cool marble terrace. Touches of unexpected beauty all help establish a perfect mood in this superbly colored work.

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59

WOMAN AND MONKEY
Stone
11th century; from Khajuraho area, Madhya Pradesh
89 x 27 x 27 cm
National Museum, New Delhi; No. 75.430

The Chandela sculptor seems to take great delight in exploring the beauty of the feminine form from unusual angles. Working on the outer walls of those great monuments at Khajuraho, he created extraordinary opportunities to fill them with incredible forms seen now at eye level, now from above, tucked away in narrow corners, now mingling with the gods or playing with them. Presenting each figure or group was one thing, but showing their bodies turned in extraordinary torsion and attitudes quite another. This was not merely a matter of rendering elaborate sexual encounters: even single figures such as this one were turned on their axis with a view to capturing the grace and the elegance of forms in as many ways as possible. Here, the sculptor of this delicately wrought work views the very lightly draped figure from behind, but just at the moment when she turns a little, head bent, torso taut but resilient, to look at a monkey clambering up her leg and playfully undoing the knot of her lower garment, making it slip along her elegant, well-proportioned form. The monkey is perhaps a reminder of the playfulness of the lover, but he certainly allows the sculptor to linger affectionately over the detail of the sensuous sinewy figure of the *nayika*.

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HASYA: THE COMIC SENTIMENT

हास्यरस

THE ENDURING EMOTIONAL state (*sthayibhava*) which leads to Hasya is laughter (*hasa*). Bharata makes a clear distinction between the two modes into which the *rasa* falls: "When a person himself laughs, it relates to the self-centered [comic sentiment], but when he makes others laugh, it [the comic sentiment therein] is centered in others." Bharata then goes on to break laughter into six different varieties. According to him, these belong "respectively, to the superior, the middling, and the inferior types of persons." Thus:

> To persons of the superior type belong the slight smile and the smile; to those of the middling type, the gentle laughter and the laughter of ridicule; and to those of the inferior type the vulgar laughter and the excessive laughter.

The determinants (*vibhavas*) spoken of in the context of Hasya include "showing unseemly dress or ornament, impudence, greediness, quarreling, defective limbs, use of irrelevant words, mentioning of different faults, and similar other things." The representation "on the stage" is through consequents "like the throbbing of lips, the nose and the cheek, opening the eyes wide or contracting them, perspiration, change in color of the face and taking hold of the sides." The complementary emotional states that the sentiment draws upon are "indolence, dissimulation, drowsiness, sleep, dreaming, insomnia, envy and the like." There are further refinements, from the viewpoint of stylized acting, of looks and gestures to be employed. Thus, it is stated that the slight smile of the people of the superior type should be "characterized by slightly blown cheeks and elegant glances and in it teeth are not to be made visible"; the more pronounced smile should, however, "be distinguished by blooming eyes, face and cheeks, and in it teeth should be slightly visible." So on it goes, till we arrive at vulgar and excessive laughter which includes "laughter on occasions not suitable to it, or with the shoulder and the head violently shaking," or "expanded eyes and loud and excessive sound."

Bharata is clearly thinking of and describing the world of the stage. In sculpture and painting, laughter is not as often or as easily portrayed, and the point may sometimes be elusive, since cultural differences and stylizations are not always easily understood; in fact, disagreements are likely to arise about the intention of the artist in given works. But it would seem as if in rendering Hasya, the sculptor and painter go beyond the evidently comic, and understand the mood to be that of playfulness and mirth. As depicted in the visual arts, often it is not drollery (as in the case of theater) that is the occasion of Hasya but a certain wit or joyous abandon. Gamboling or skittish characters, pot-bellied figures, playful and jubilant companions who show mock anger, tease, mimic and poke fun, all get covered by it in one way or the other.

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60

DANCING GANESHA
Sandstone
10th century; from Siron Khurd, Lalitpur District, Uttar Pradesh
117 x 68 cm
Government Museum, Jhansi, No. 81.45

Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, ubiquitous on Indian monuments and in other art, and possessing a vast array of names—Ekadanta, Lambodara, Vighneshwara, Vinayaka, Vakratunda—is regarded with great earnestness by perhaps everyone except himself. There are exalted descriptions of his powers:

> we learn how he has swallowed and holds in his vast belly . . . eggs of all the universes and the orbs of destruction (Rudras) by the million and feasted on all the pervaders (Vishnus);

but ordinarily he is regarded as mild and gentle, appeased by as simple an offering as a plateful of sweetmeats. Invoked at the beginnings of all enterprises, he is the remover *par excellence* of obstacles and sits benignly at crucial points over doorways to auspicious buildings. It is thus, in his serious aspect, that he is often treated by the Indian sculptor. But the sculptor also turns with great delight to the thought of showing Ganesha dancing. The heavy figure of Ganesha with his enormous head, prosperous belly, short stubby legs and arms, does not offer promising possibilities for dance, and yet Ganesha dances with such relish and so often in Indian sculpture that he has become in this aspect a singularly familiar figure.

This large and beautifully chiselled figure from Siron Khurd which has yielded such a horde of antiquities, attests an inner joy that seems to pervade Ganesha's whole being. His right leg a little raised and the left bearing the weight of the body, Ganesha dances not vigorously, as his father Shiva often does, but leisurely. Here he has as many as fourteen arms, mostly broken; but significant emblematical objects—the snake, a rosary, a battle-axe, the end of drapery—are held in the hands still intact. Ganesha dances, the hint of a smile in his eyes, something that continues into the joyous stance and gestures (*mudras*) that he strikes. Around him are musicians who play upon their instruments and keep time; behind his feet is his *vahana*, the mouse. He wears one uncommon embellishment, the sacred thread in the form of a serpent, knotted across his belly. Carved in the round, the figure is elegantly finished at the back, each detail laboriously worked out as is the jewelry that adorns his entire ponderous figure.

Literature

P.C. Mukherjee, *Report on the Antiquities of the District of Lalitput, N.W.P.*, Roorkee, 1899; S.D. Trivedi, *Sculpture in the Jhansi Museum*, Jhansi, 1983, fig. 41 and p. 59.

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61

A PIQUANT SITUATION: SHIVA'S SNAKE DESERTS HIM AT THE ARRIVAL OF VISHNU ON GARUDA
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century
24Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 2380

Intent only upon amusing, the Pahari painter who painted this work is not referring here to a known episode from any myth or story: he is only pursuing some general facts that would be true of these characters in a situation which he dreamed up entirely on his own. Shiva, the divine mendicant, is seated with his consort Parvati in his favorite abode, the Kailasha: as a recluse, he is naked except for his loincloth, in this instance a snake, he being their lord and wholly comfortable with them.

Everything indicates a *fakir's* situation. Shiva's seat is a tiger skin, a calabash lies next to him, his wife wears a patchwork wrap, a simple fire keeps them warm, and his vehicle, the Nandi bull, stands behind them. While the pair is thus seated, Vishnu comes visiting unexpectedly. But Vishnu's mount (*vahana*) is the great sun-bird, Garuda, a natural enemy of snakes. As soon as Vishnu alights from Garuda, the bird advances instinctively toward the snake around Shiva's loins and, seeing this, the snake hurriedly leaves Shiva's middle and decides to fend for itself by rushing into an ant hill. Parvati notices this, and concerned for her husband's modesty, she quickly averts her face even as she tears a strip of cloth from her *sari* and offers it to Shiva to cover himself, however tentatively. Vishnu looks on with benign amusement.

It might seem, to begin with, that the joke is told almost too elaborately but this is not so, for the knowing viewer would be able to take in the situation at a glance. The intention on the part of the painter, it might be added, is to invent a humorous episode, not to be irreverent.

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62

BEARS AND A MONKEY SPORTING
From an *Anvar-i-Suhaili* manuscript
Gouache on paper
Mughal, 1596; by Shankar
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 9069/18

From the range of delightful fables that constitute the *Anvar-i-Suhaili*, a favorite work of the Mughal painter, considering the number of illustrated manuscripts of it that he turned out, the painter Shankar picks up this episode of bears and a monkey sporting. No necessary point is being made in this leaf and the episode forms a part of a longer narrative that constitutes this fable; but the painter indulges himself and produces a study, mostly of bears, in a remarkable variety of attitudes. Striking almost human stances, some of them certainly bearing human expressions, the bears lie down, crouch on their hind legs like travelers around a fire all set to make idle pleasurable conversation, peer into the roots of a tree, lean against a neighbor, nuzzle the stomach with the head turned back, raise a foreleg to the eye sagely, as if giving advice, and lurk behind a tree in a game of hide and seek. In the subtle grouping of some of the bears, the painter suggests certain families that stick together as their members converse, sulk, and poke fun at each other. The center is occupied by the figure of a monkey that has jumped on to the back of a bear who walks toward the right.

The painter has obviously derived great fun from working on this leaf, something that is apparent in the variety of attitudes and looks with which he invests the animals: there is doubt and suspicion, wisdom and slyness in these animals, who do not ordinarily figure in those splendid, isolated studies of animals that the Mughal painters worked on.

The setting is a bare patch of land at the end of water, but there are trees in close reach and little shrubs and bushes are scattered all around; far in the distance appears a tiny view of a town, in the manner that we know so well from Akbari painting. The drawing, the superb coloring, and the keenness of observation in this work live up to all that one expects in Mughal work of this time.

Literature

In the Image of Man, London, 1982, p. 81.

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63

A DWARF ATTENDANT
Limestone
2nd century; Nagarjunakonda, Andhra Pradesh
69 x 30.5 x 15 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. P 2542



The unusually stern expression on the face of this attendant figure does not, for those who know the frolicsome world of *ganas*, detract from the amusing nature of this dwarfish pot-bellied figure. The sculptor almost certainly wants us to see past the attendant's imposing facade; he is simply striking an attitude, as if assuming power that he does not really possess. The elaborate turban with central boss, the heavy earrings and necklace, the delicate folds of the loose garment, the elaborate knots and loops of the waistband that struggles to hold the amplitude of the stomach in place, the hand on the waist, all suggest a princely figure born to command. But the woefully short, plump stature whittles all that away, when the sculptor pointedly gives the figure a club that is quite as tall as he, breaking the illusion of his commanding power.

This figure stands in contrast to the main body of work from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, for it has none of the fluent rhythms we generally associate with those sites.

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64

PLAYFUL FIGURES ON A JAMB
Sandstone
11th century; from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
76 x 35 cm
Archaeological Museum, Khajuraho, No. 1058

The delight the Indian sculptor took in small ordinary things around him finds unexpected expression in reliefs like this one. There is no special occasion which this category of sculpture celebrates; hardly any literary or mythological authority can be cited for them. What we see is merely an expression of exuberance, a playful approach to life. On this fragment, the elaborate cursive floral scroll at the side fits neatly with the decorative intent on the kind of medieval monument from which it must have come. But three pairs of young, playful boys, assuming certain roles, suddenly take the work in another direction. The top pair seems to emulate pious, devout adults, the middle pair takes off on dancers and musicians, and the two diminutive figures at the bottom sit around a book stand and assume an air of great learning. The intention is not perhaps to satirize these activities, and certainly not to make fun of known individuals, but simply to bring out a sense of fun among boys casting themselves in roles inappropriate to their years.

The carving is remarkably assured, the sculptor being entirely at ease with his material and subject. Little details, like rendering the loose puppy fat on the boys' cheeks and bellies as they move about and dance are impressive. The figures are in high relief, seeming to come out of the shadows of their niches. This medieval piece explores considerably more than the surface of the stone.

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65

CELEBRATIONS OF KRISHNA'S BIRTH
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
20.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1275

The announcement of Krishna's birth in the house of Nanda is occasion for great region-wide celebration. The painter of this *Bhagavata Purana*, partaking of this in his own manner, devotes a separate leaf to the music played on the occasion. The standard descriptions of festive occasions in the text of the *Purana* include references to music, but the painter here brings in, with wonderful verve, a range of instruments that he knew from his own environment: the double-headed *dhol*, the twin kettle-drums, the clarinet-like *shehnai*, and elaborate long horns of three different types which are associated with Pahari folk music. As music is played, two young *gopas* break into dance, their fluttering scarves interpreting their feelings.

By his placement of the figures, the painter breaks up the composition and fills the page with a spreading, billowing joy. Except for the four musicians who strain at their wind-instruments, their cheeks swollen with the effort, the other characters reveal in their expressions a true inner happiness. The interest in patterns is once again evident, and there is a marked flair with which colors are selected and distributed all over the glowing flat ground, but this concern of the artist's is not allowed to dominate the work, which remains full of well-defined joyous sentiment.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting*, New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot; B.N. Goswamy, *The Bhagavata Paintings from Mankot*, 1978; B.N. Goswamy and A.L. Dallapiccola, *Krishna the Divine Lover*, Lausanne, 1982; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna*, West Franklin, 1980.

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66

A SMILING GIRL
Terracotta with pinkish-white slip
3rd to 2nd century B.C.; from Bulandibagh, Patna (Bihar)
12 cm
Patna Museum, Patna, No. 4178

The function that small heads of this kind served in early India can only be guessed, but their engaging, cheerful quality is evident. This head might well have been modeled after performers of the kind that appear in other Mauryan terracottas, but here, gently smiling and imbued with a spreading, inner joy, she has a different impact. The appearance of the head is familiar, in particular the bicornate headgear involving wrapping, cloth, and tassels (now damaged), that once created an aureole. But we quickly pass to the finely shaped nose, the sensitive lips, and the elongated eyes, all of which give her expression a charm that makes us smile. The look is not inviting in the usual sense, but shows an inward delight at something that we are not allowed to share.

Around the neck originally was a fine ornamental piece, now greatly damaged. It has been suggested that it bears a relationship to the jewelry associated with Taxila. The function of the small holes on the top of the horns is not clear. Perhaps they were meant for flowers, or as attachment points for plaques.

Literature

Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Reports, 1912–13, 1917–18, 1926–27; K.P. Jayaswal, "Terracottas Dug Out at Patna," III, 1935; *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, III, 1935; M.K. Dhavalikar, *Masterpieces of Indian Terracottas*, Bombay; P.L. Gupta, *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*, 1965.

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67

HEAD OF A SMILING BOY
Stucco
3rd-4th century; from Gandhara
10 x 9 x 10 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. JN 16 F.28.876

The small size of this head keeps one initially from taking in the wonderful delicacy of its workmanship. It is only when one looks closely that the joyous blending of innocence and mischief on the face comes across. The smile illuminates the entire visage and rather quickly travels to the viewer, for it is strangely tender and infectious. One would not be able to guess what place this little head, so like many other stucco heads from the Gandhara region with markedly expressive faces, must have occupied in the sculptural scheme of the artists of this region. They are strangely moving, often far more so than the rows of reliefs and steles carved with far more elevated themes in the Buddhist context of *stupas* at which the Gandharan sculptor worked so hard.

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68

KRISHNA DANCING WITH BUTTER BALLS
Gouache on linen
Last quarter of the 18th century; from a Mysore workshop
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.536

As a butter thief, the child Krishna is a source of great joy and amusement. His mother, Yashoda, quite naturally gets angry and chastises him from time to time, but the anger is most often feigned. Whether real or feigned makes little difference to Krishna, for he goes on merrily, leaping on the backs of his cowherd friends or climbing ladders to reach pots of butter hanging from the ceiling, dipping into the large earthen vessels in which his mother churns milk. All this is evidently a part of his divine play (*lila*). Devotees know him to be the Lord of the Universe, but he enjoys his role as a child growing up in the little village of Gokula, and whenever he is able to steal enough butter, he breaks into joyous dance.

Here, the look in Krishna's eyes is one of triumph and mischief, as if he has finally succeeded in hoodwinking all those who keep him from what he dearly loves. One imagines his heavy jewelry twinkling as he moves; like an acrobat he balances butter balls in his two hands, and the manner in which the artist fills the spaces with lotuses inside the arch suggests that these objects are also being juggled by him.

The work is extraordinarily stylized, with exaggerations and distortions an integral part of it. The heavy bulging figure, the strongly modeled areas where protuberances and joints are shown, the thick contours, the emphasis on features such as the eyes and the mouth, both treated with the noble artificiality of a dancer's mask, all appear a little strange at first, but exert a powerful pull. It is the decoration that attracts, as much as the rhythms and the easy, fluid flow which give it a robust charm.

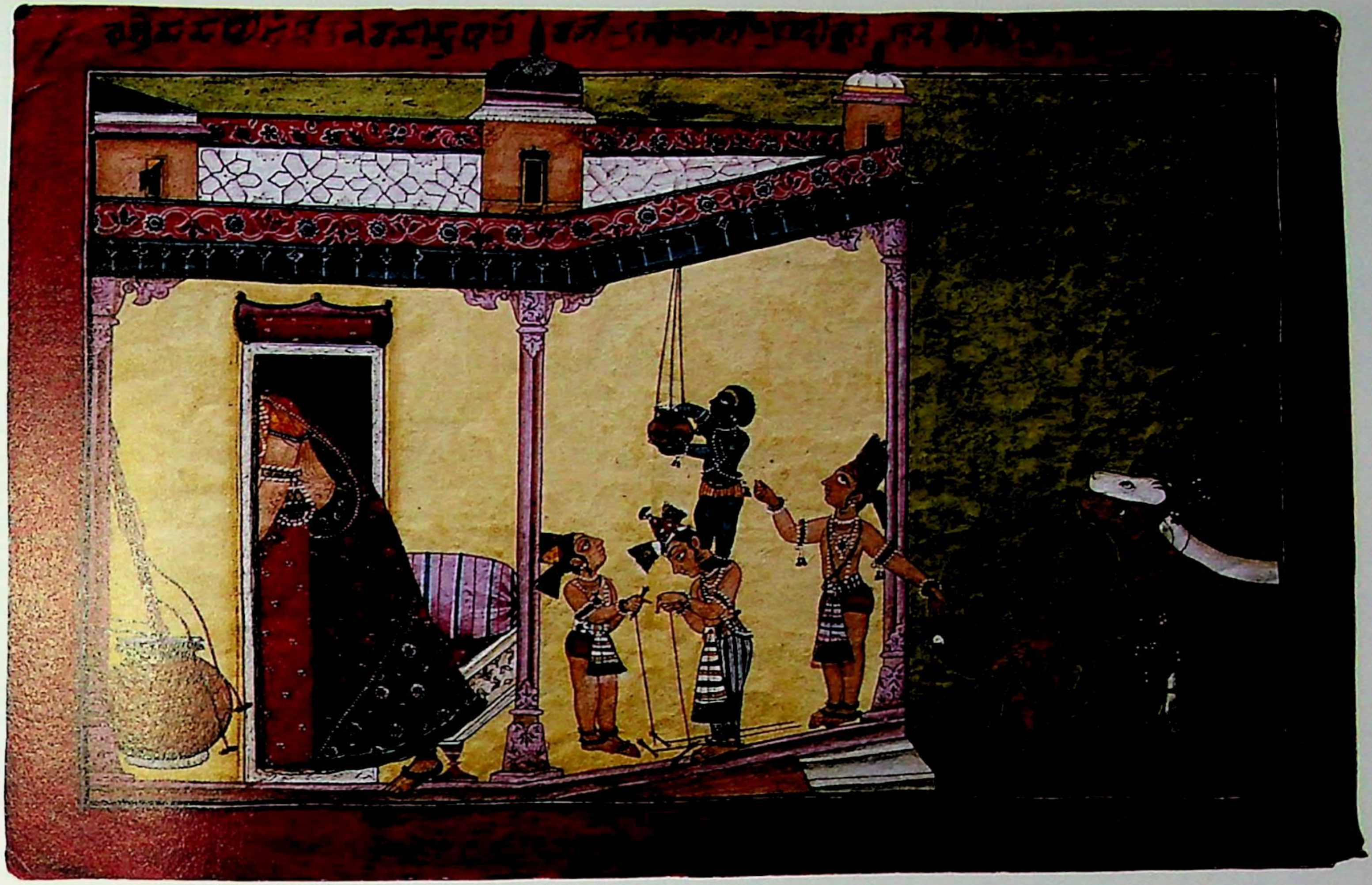
An inscription in Devanagari at the top right identifies the figure as "Bala Mukund Ji; Sri Krishna Ji," simply an identifying label on the picture.

On the back of this painting is a fully painted image of Vishnu as Venkateshwara, four-armed, wearing a prominent *tilak* on the forehead, and a tall crown on the head. But whereas this has the air of icon, somewhat stiff and frozen, the joyous dancing figure of the child Krishna is full of mellifluous movement.

Literature

Walter Spink, *Krishnamandala*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1971, fig. 21.

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69

KRISHNA STEALS BUTTER
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Descriptive label in Takri on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
20.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh; No. 1301

Among the finest series of paintings inspired by the *Bhagavata Purana*—that early text which is of such central importance to the cult of Vishnu, especially his eighth incarnation, Krishna, is the one from which the present leaf is taken. The work of some anonymous masters active at the little hill state of Mankot, in the early years of the eighteenth century, this is a series of "bustling verve and gay anarchic spirit," as W.G. Archer puts it, with its "swirling rhythms, the impulsive eruptions of its strong and sturdy forms, the insouciance with which shapes are hurled around, the avoidance of all rich or intricate details, its dramatic concentration on basic essentials, and perhaps, above all, its air of swaggering elation." It is unlikely that the entire *Bhagavata Purana* was visualized by the painters of this dazzling series; what has survived at any rate is the Tenth Book portion, which tells the story of Krishna in such intimate, loving detail.

This leaf is devoted to one of the best-loved episodes from the childhood of Krishna as he grows up in the household of his foster-parents, Nanda and Yashoda. He is constantly up to pranks, and loved all the more for them. There are songs sung still that speak with joy and devotion of the way he, in his winsome, irresistible manner, teased everyone in the village from his mother down to the maidens and householders of the neighborhood. In these pranks he frequently teamed up with his little cowherd friends, and here we see him with his mates in action, stealing butter. As the inscription on top says, Yashoda his mother interrupts the churning of the curds for a moment and goes inside, where the milk she had left on the fire is about to boil. Seizing the opportunity, Krishna quickly calls up his friends, leaps on to the back of one of them and reaches up to the earthen pot hanging from the ceiling and containing his much-loved balls of butter. Not only does he take butter out for himself, but also for all his companions who include a monkey and two cows who seem to be enjoying the situation very much. Were he to be caught in the act by his mother, Krishna would send up a wail and protest perfect innocence. In his words, Krishna would first blame his *gopa*-friends, older than himself, for how could he have gotten up to the pot of butter, hanging as it does so high from the ceiling?

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As in the rest of this whole series, the painter shows a perfect and intuitive understanding of the essence of each situation and episode. The sudden if temporary diversion of Yashoda's attention as she looks inside for the boiling milk; the alternating looks of caution and conspiratorial concentration on the faces of Krishna and his companions; the carefully set up chain of events from Krishna through the *gopas* to the monkey are all very thoughtfully worked out. There is much intricate detail and interest in patterns in the dress of Yashoda, in the architectural details and in the earthen pot from which little streams of curd spill out—but it is never allowed to take away from the boldness or the clarity of the human action seen throughout the series.

Two other series of the same theme, from Mankot and in a very closely-related hand, have survived but they are in vertical format. However, they do not attain the uniformly high quality of the present, horizontal series. It is almost as if the vertical format inhibits the painter in some manner, not allowing him to expand in the manner that he was most used to.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting,* New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills,* London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot; B.N. Goswamy, *The Bhagavata Paintings from Mankot,* 1978; *Krishna the Divine Lover,* Lausanne, 1982; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna,* West Franklin, 1980.

70

KRISHNA STEALS THE MILKMAIDS' CLOTHES
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 51
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd or 4th quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
National Museum, Delhi; No. 58.18/11

The love that the *gopis* (milkmaids) bore Krishna "waxed like the moon," each desiring him in her own way, as the text of the *Bhagavata Purana* says. They would thus devise all kinds of ways to be united with him; they fasted and did penance; they stole out of their homes to go into the forest where he stood playing upon his beloved flute; they visited Nanda's home under all kinds of pretexts just to steal a glimpse of the one who stole their hearts.

One season, several *gopis* decided to observe a special fast (*vrata*) in honor of the goddess Katyayani, who would grant them their hearts' desire. The *vrata* involved going to the Yamuna to bathe in the early morning, which they did without hesitation, since they used to fetch water from the river in any case. There they would undress, bathe, and sport each day with the innocence that the young alone possess. Krishna got to know of this practice, and he decided to sneak to the river.

When the *gopis* were frolicking in the water, he stole their clothes and climbed with the garments into a tree on the river-bank. Their bathing over, the *gopis* returned to the bank to find that their clothes had vanished. Greatly alarmed, they looked all around until one noticed Krishna in the *kadamba* tree with their clothes, looking down and smiling with mischief. Abashed and angry, the girls quietly re-entered the water and remonstrated with him, but Krishna was unmoved. He would return their clothes only if they came ashore, naked, and begged him with folded hands. Reactions varied among the *gopis*; there was hesitation, anger, shyness, agreement. Neither their threats nor entreaties had any effect on Krishna. At last they decided to come out, completely naked, not even permitted to cover themselves with their hands, as they first tried. When they came out thus, Krishna returned their clothes while reading them—clearly an afterthought—a lesson on respecting the god that resides in the water by not bathing in it naked.

This prank of Krishna's, called *chira harana*, is much loved and celebrated in song and picture. The painter of this splendid work clearly relished the opportunity of rendering a group of attractive nudes, and is mindful of the need to represent their varying reactions. Some of the girls have finally reconciled themselves to the situation and stand frankly naked, like the one close to the tree trunk; others huddle behind each other to get whatever protection they can; still others close their eyes or look away, while three of them have not been able to muster enough courage to emerge from the water.

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72

THE SPRING FESTIVAL HOLI

The painting has the usual brilliance of coloring and fluency of line associated with this superb series. But one might also notice a slow development during contemplative viewing: from abashment on behalf of the girls one passes on to certain delight.

relief, the range of stances and gestures, the little dra-

Literature

A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Catalogue of the Indian Collection in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, V, Boston, 1926; Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958; W.G. Archer, *The Loves of Krishna in Indian Painting and Poetry*, London, 1957; M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings of the Bhagavata Purana*, New Delhi, 1960; B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg*, XXI:4, September, 1968; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, vol. 1, London, 1973, pp. 293–295.

Librarian Gurukul Kangri University HARDWAR

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Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting,* New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills,* London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot; B.N. Goswamy, *The Bhagavata Paintings from Mankot,* 1978; *Krishna the Divine Lover,* Lausanne, 1982; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna,* West Franklin, 1980.

70

KRISHNA STEALS THE MILKMAIDS' CLOTHES
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Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd or 4th quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
National Museum, Delhi; No. 58.18/11

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The discerning viewer, sensitized to situations and sentiments of this kind, easily perceives the work at various levels.

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Librarian Gurukul Kangri Uni HARDWAR

72
THE SPRING FESTIVAL HOLI
On verso, inscribed with the name "Gursahai"
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 267/526

The onset of spring, occasion for much revelry and celebration, does not go unnoticed in the context of Krishna and his companions, the cowherds and the *gopis*, for it provides yet another occasion for the poet and the painter to establish these relationships at a different level. While everyone else celebrates the festival, as it is done even today in India—by throwing colored powder, soaking one another with colored water from syringes, and singing—between Krishna and Radha, the play of Holi takes on another significance. Suddenly, amid so much noise and activity, their eyes become locked, as the poets say, and they get drenched in each other's love as much as they do in the water that is being squirted around.

A great many paintings on the theme of Holi being celebrated in Vraja (in the land around Mathura it is still a remarkably spirited festival) were painted, and this is among the finest. The wonderful air of festivity, the grouping of figures which leaves space in the center for Radha and Krishna to be placed in relief, the range of stances and gestures, the little dramatic vignettes involving so much animation, are all handled with singular ability. But the work goes beyond these effects, and the eye is led, through the tender, encouraging eyes of the companions of Radha, to the two lovers who stand transfixed. That is where passionate attachment is seen at its most affecting, and suddenly some of the women musicians stop short, much more intent on what is happening there than on playing their instruments.

The work is evidently by a member of the Seu-Nainsukh family and suggests the hand of Manak or his son Fattu. The inscription on the back is misleading, for it mentions the name of Gursahai, Nainsukh's grandson, whose dates fall in the early part of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the inscription was intended only to state that the work came from "the home of Gursahai" (as in the case of some other paintings of this family), or was acquired from it.

Literature

Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari, Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958, p. 329; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, pp. 140–143, pl. 137; B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg*, XXI:4, September, 1968.

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73

YOUNG BOY DANCING WITH JOY
Terracotta
4th–5th century; from Harwan, Kashmir
49 x 45 cm
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 2350 D

Barely two miles from the famous Shalimar Gardens in Kashmir stands the small, unpretentious village of Harwan, ancient Shadarhadvana (Grove of Six Saints) where one of the more exciting archaeological discoveries of this century was made. Small, stray finds of votive tablets and fragments stamped with *stupa* reliefs led to the excavation of a mound where, eventually, a wonderful pavement of a large apsidal temple was discovered. The entire pavement was in the shape of a large central disc surrounded by several concentric circles. Each circle was composed of a series of arc-shaped tiles, each stamped with a motif, the designs ranging from running geese and fighting rams to ladies holding flower vases, soldiers hunting deer, and boys carrying floral festoons. That a very clear scheme of decoration was intended is evident from the numbers in Kharoshthi script marked on each tile to ensure their simple and orderly laying.

Several tiles were stamped with heads of men and women that suggested central Asian features to R.C. Kak, who discussed the find in some detail many years ago. He also suggested that perhaps the images were in the likeness of the donor and his wife who might, out of humility, have had them laid on the ground so that the commonest of people could tread upon them before reaching the temple.

However, this does not quite explain the total decorative scheme of the tile floor, for the range of motifs is considerable and the tiles are not necessarily thematically connected. This tile represents a joyous moment in the life of a young man as he breaks into a spirited dance, leaping into the air, his body seized with an inner delight, his scarf fluttering and imparting wonderful movement to the form. We are in an area of experience different from ascetics sitting huddled up or soldiers hunting: what causes this joy can only be guessed at, but the feeling is undeniable and infectious. The patterning around the main area of the tile probably linked up with the neighboring tiles to make a logical pattern.

Scholars disagree on the dating of Harwan. Kak feels it goes back to about A.D. 300; others place it at least a century or more later.

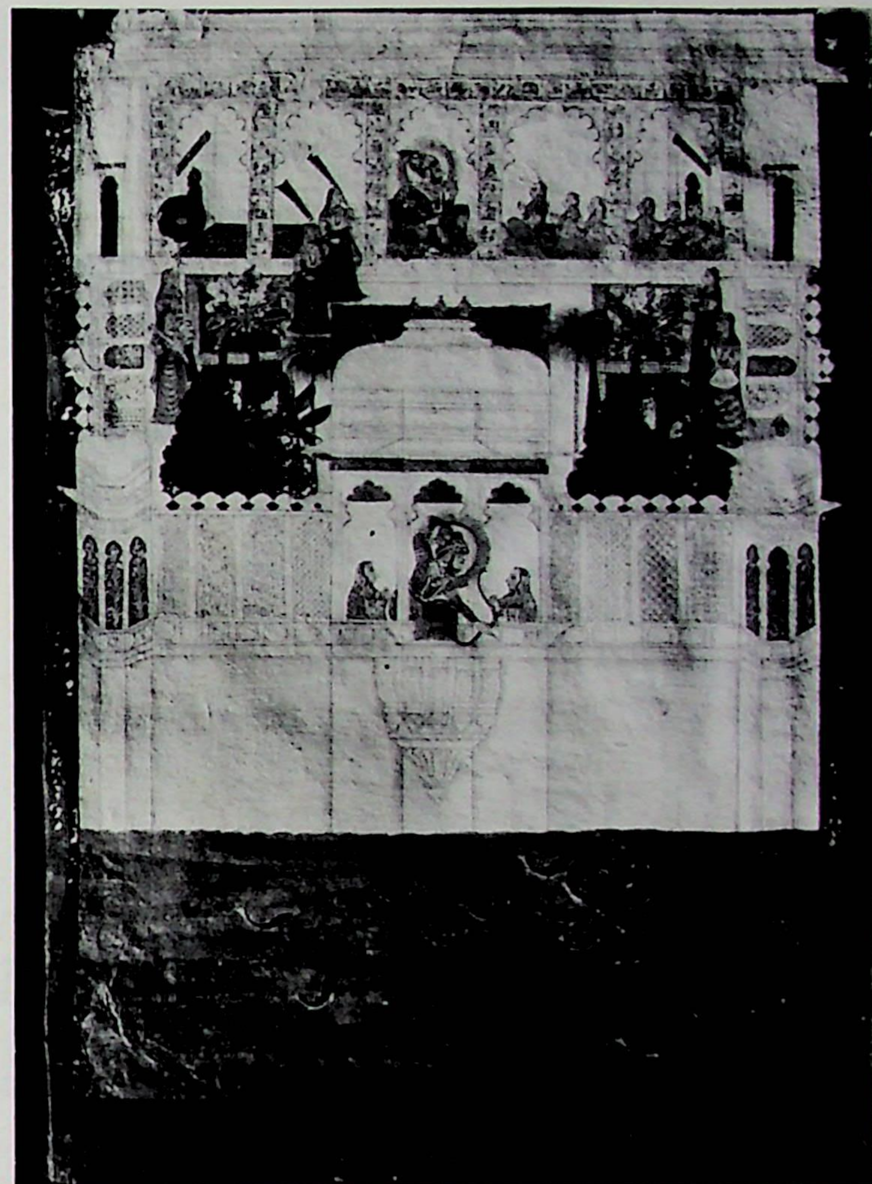
Literature

R.C. Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, London, 1933.

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74

MAHARANA ARI SINGH OF MEWAR "HUNTING" FISH
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; attributable to Bakhta of Mewar
State Museum, Lucknow, No. 57.122



The twelve years of the rule of Maharana Ari Singh, from 1761 to 1773, if marked by the ruler's "oppressiveness and vile temper," also saw a remarkable spurt of painting activity at Mewar. Some of the best paintings of this period have a lively, playful quality. Here we see him in the palace overlooking the great lake of Udaipur, shooting arrows at fish searching for food below the royal pavilion where the maharana is seated with two female companions. We see him again, at the back, seated with part of his harem, many women facing him and others, bearing fly-whisks and emblems of state, standing in the little garden below the chamber which is also bedecked prominently with Dutch tiles.

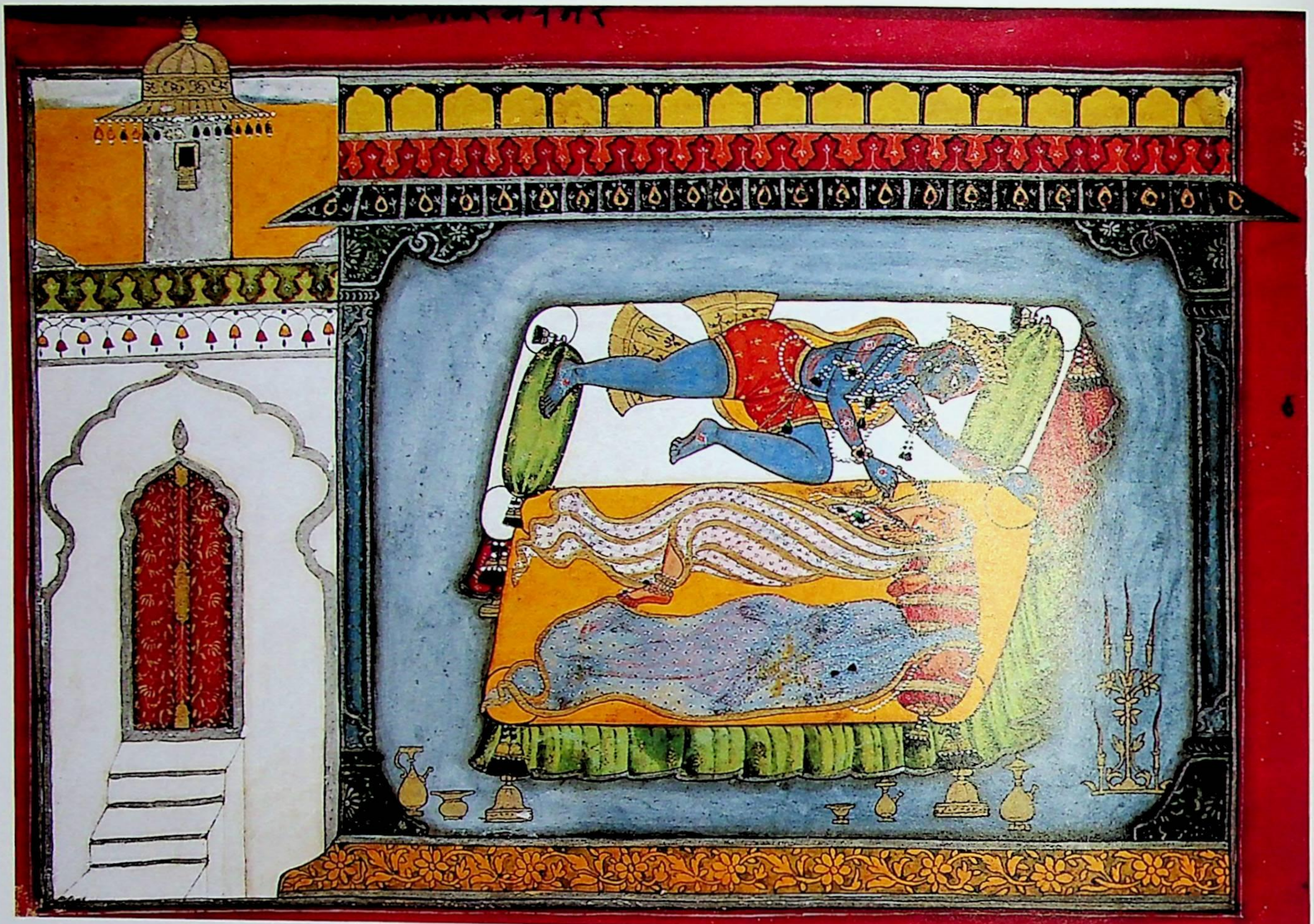
A dreamlike quality invests the painting, with its emphasis on the conch-shell white architecture, its intricate carving and patterning on the walls, cupolas, and floor, but above all on the strange sport of shooting fish with bow and arrow. This amusement of the maharana is brought in by the painter perhaps to contrast with the more manly practice of feeding the crocodiles in the Jagmandir lake, to which a painting of the period of Maharana Sangram Singh (1710–34) is devoted.

In style and feeling, this painting is very close to the dated painting in the hand of Bakhta showing Maharana Ari Singh in *darbar*, now in Melbourne (see below), and can be attributed to the same painter. This is evidently the same Bakhta (Bagta) who later worked for the Rawats of Deogarh and produced, in that "vigorous local variant" of the Udaipur style, delightful work. He seems to have been particularly taken by the Dutch tiles, which he plays with in his own fashion, adding to them new and inventive motifs of his own.

Literature

R.K. Vashishtha, *Mewar Ki Chitrankan Parampara*, Jaipur, 1984; Andrew Topsfield, *Paintings from Rajasthan in the National Gallery of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1980, esp. No. 167.

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75

REACHING OUT STEALTHILY
From the same *Rasamanjari* series as No. 39
On verso, Sanskrit; on front, *dhira jyeshtha kanishtha* (the patient ones, senior and junior) in Takri characters on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, No. 354

In this series of the *Rasamanjari*, the painter takes us remarkably close to the action, not to make voyeurs of us but to imprint the situation firmly on the mind. Everything is boldly etched and laid out flat, as if within perfect vision and reach. The situation envisaged here by the poet is that there are two heroines, one possibly a senior wife and the other one loved more ardently, at least at this moment, by Krishna. Some happening that preceded the amusing moment shown when both women were *dhiras* (angry over some fault or misdeed of his, but patient enough not to show it) must be taken for granted. At night Krishna is eager to make up, perhaps prove his innocence, but only to his "beloved," not to the other woman. He sees, to his chagrin, that the heroines are sharing a bed—a common occurrence throughout this series—and decides to approach the loved one in his own clever manner, stealthily:

> When the *nayaka*, raising his head, saw both of his lotus-eyed beloveds sleeping together in one bed, one of whom was veiling her face, he stealthily drew near the other, gently tugged at her *sari*, and awakened her from her sleep.
>
> (18)

The beds here appear perilously angled, placed in the interest of maximum visibility. Krishna is dressed very scantily. He reaches out softly from his own bed—one notices how he takes the *sari* of his beloved between his fingers and gently pulls so as not to waken the other lady. Krishna's eager, impatient eyes, wide open in the night, contrast with the closed eyes of the women. But the more marked and delightful contrast is between the drapes of the two; the one truly asleep is covered by a relatively flat, inert-looking sheet while the other, about to be awakened (perhaps already awake and only pretending to be asleep), wears a striped wrap that curls and moves with the desire that courses through her.

Literature
See No. 39.

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76

"ANSWERING WITH A SMILE"
From the same *Rasamanjari* series as No. 39
On verso, Sanskrit; on front, *sakhi parihas* (jest by a friend) in Takri characters on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, No.391

Jests and meaningful riddles, all in the context of love, form a part of the literature on Shringara. The friendly little game played between the *sakhi* and the heroine, in this case Sita, Rama's consort, has as its background the convention, followed quite strictly in an earlier age, according to which wives would not utter the names of their husbands out of respect, and would refer to them indirectly or in a circumlocutory way. Trying to catch Sita offguard, her *sakhi* suddenly springs a question:

> "O Sita! who was the Seventh One?" the *sakhi* asked, pointing to the ten painted panels on the wall of the chamber, depicting the [ten] incarnations of God [Vishnu]. Sita, however, looked up and just smiled. In her smile was the answer.

The name of the ten *avataras* are learned by everyone as if in litany and, since the sequence is well-established, naming "the Seventh" would be naming Rama, something that Sita would not do, this being her husband's name who was the Seventh incarnation. Sita quickly understands the *sakhi*'s mischievous trap, keeps quiet, and smiles.

Of uncommon interest are the renderings of the ten incarnations on the wall, their standardized compositions appearing in Pahari painting at this early date. The *sakhi* is pointing to "the Seventh," but we are able easily to recognize all the others despite the fact that they are in a very small, fine hand. Little things demand attention: we recognize Sita standing at the left because of her superior status, suggested through the cushion behind her; the chamber is of unusual proportions, having been elongated by the painter for accommodating the ten painted panels on the back wall; the coloring is relatively subdued because the usual kind of passion does not figure here.

Literature
See No. 39.

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77

A BEAUTEOUS BURDEN
Red sandstone
2nd-3rd century; Sanghol, Punjab
98 x 11 x 12 cm
Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Punjab, Chandigarh, No. 22

Supple as the delicately rendered tree in blossom above, an elegantly attired and coiffured young lady rides on the back of a much older, burly man in this unusual scene from a carved pillar from the *stupa* railing at Sanghol. It is not easy to make out how this mismatched pair would fit into the scheme of things around a Buddhist *stupa*. Perhaps it is a segment of life which the sculptor aims at presenting. Here he may be offering a comment on a late, obviously unequal "marriage" unless, of course, he has picked up his theme from a literary text of which we are unaware in this context. Whatever the occasion, there is much wit in the treatment and the sculptor seems to enjoy the contrasts and the discomfiture of the situation.

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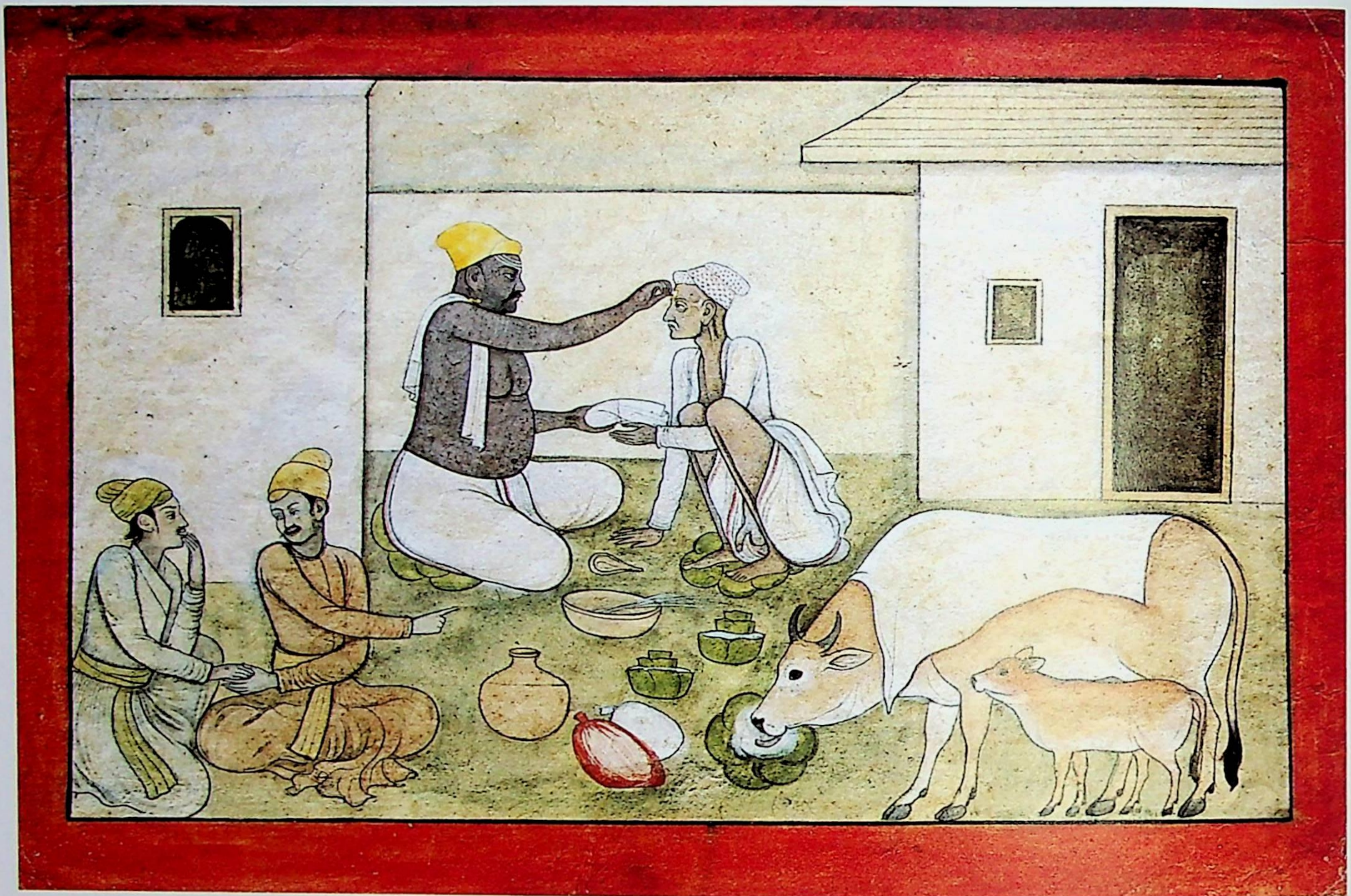


78
THE SINS OF GLUTTONY
Tinted drawing on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 258

The appetites of a category of Brahmins in India, those who preside over *shradha* ceremonies that conclude with a feast and are held each year in honor of the departed by the family members, are legendary. That they were the subject of jocular comment even two hundred years ago is clear from this tinted drawing of a giant of a pandit seated cross-legged, helping himself to a meal laid for him by a diminutive lady seated on a low wooden seat facing him. The pandit, bare-bodied, dark, and wearing prominent caste marks all over his body that identify him as a worshipper of Shiva, towers over his surroundings. It is evident from the empty containers that he has already consumed nearly everything in sight, all that had been cooked for him by the poor householder. The lady is now offering him the last of the curry from a bowl and the last of the *chapati*-breads as politeness demands, but she also looks at him inquiringly, perhaps in the hope that he will refuse.

In the Pahari tradition there is a distinct humor, and we get amusing studies, whether by the hand of a great artist like Nainsukh who has a sly comment to make on a situation, or some unknown master who wields a more direct and caustic brush. This well-drawn work is of unusual interest for another reason; it affords a glimpse of the domicile of a poor householder. The simple kitchen, with its range of utilitarian utensils, vegetables stored in niches in the wall, a small portable shrine placed at the back, and the anxious little householder all command attention.

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79

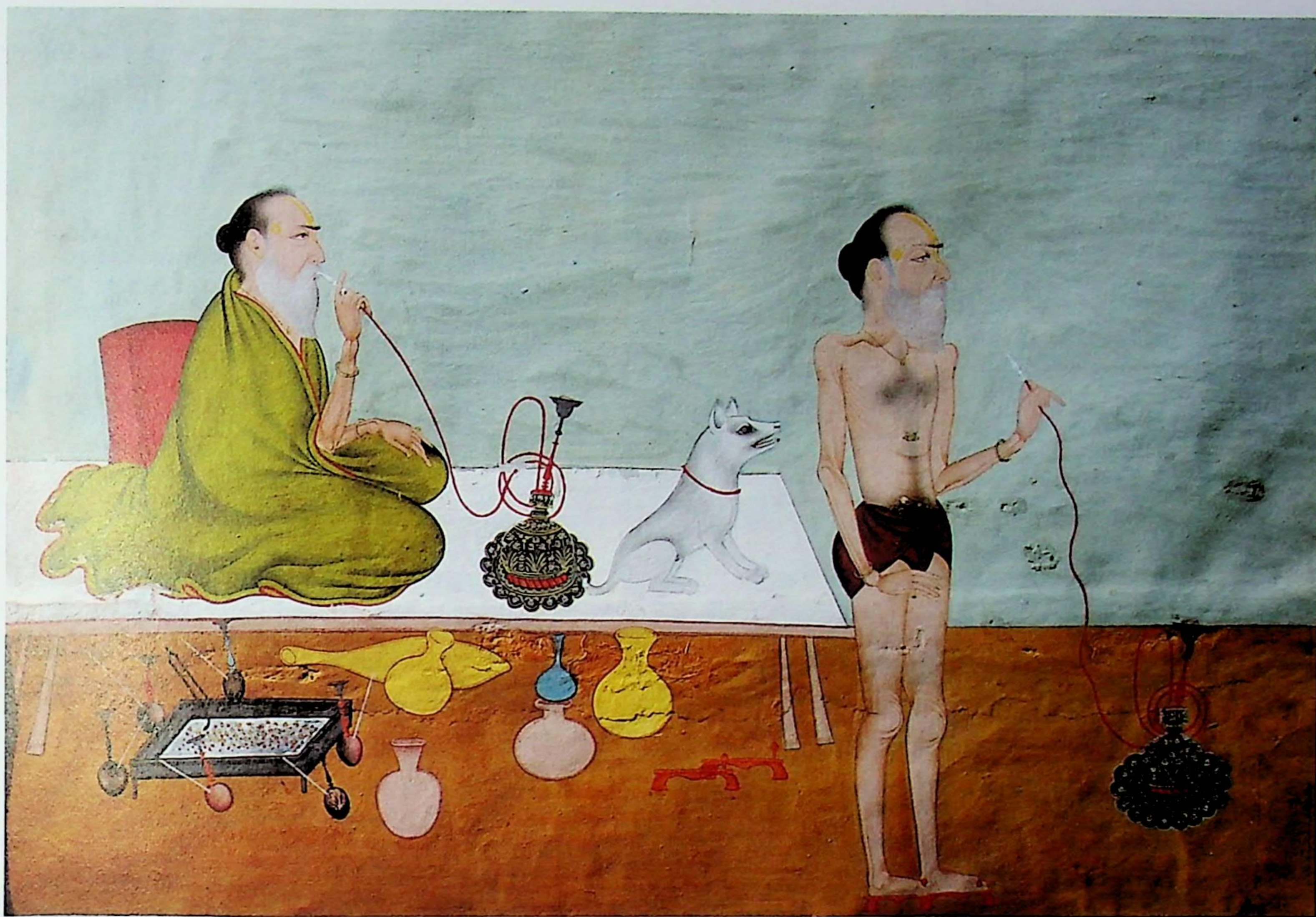
THE PRIEST AND THE DEVOTEE
Brush drawing and wash on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. J-40

Ever on the lookout for the unusual, for odd happenings and strange sights, the Pahari painter often directed his gaze toward simple households which must have been much like his own. In the least pretentious of tenements, inside a courtyard that boasted no furniture, no comforts of any kind, he must have found the models on which to base his village settings that were demanded by a narrative like the *Bhagavata Purana*. Here in this particular courtyard he finds occasion for some fun.

A devout householder of advanced years has invited a priest to his home, evidently to preside over some ritual or ceremony. The ceremony during which the dark and corpulent priest has been suitably fed is over, and gifts have been made, including a piece of cloth, as is still customary, and a cow with a calf, as would be indicated by the ceremonial cloth-covering on the cow's back. In return, the priest is putting the *tilak* mark as a token of blessing on the forehead of the squatting householder. But unknown to himself or the priest, he accidentally exposes his genitals in this awkward posture. This is what amuses the pair that sits in a corner of the courtyard observing the ceremony. Suddenly the solemnity of the occasion is broken; the cow licking a leaf clean of the leavings of the feast does not help, either. Irreverence and amusement become the subject of the picture.

The fluent drawing with its uncolored ground reminds one of the work of Nainsukh but falls short of it. The two observers are especially weakly drawn when compared even with the two principal characters and the cow with her calf.

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80

A CURIOUS MENDICANT
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, middle of the 18th century; from a Mewar workshop
State Museum, Lucknow, No. 57.54

What we see here is not two persons, but the same person twice. We first see him seated on a flat, wooden cot at left, wrapped elaborately in a shawl and smoking; he appears to be one of those dignified bearded *sadhus* (ascetics) that one is used to seeing in painting. That he is fond of smoking is evident, for on the ground below his cot is a coal brazier with at least half a dozen little *huqqas* resting against it. Other objects, gourds and calabashes, further establish that the man is a mendicant, a recluse. Then, suddenly, we see him again, this time standing at the right, still smoking but without his wrap. He appears to be another person: his body is bony and rickety, his legs spindly, and he is no longer possessed of the dignity which he seemed to command naturally while seated in his wrap. His own dog, failing to recognize him, snarls in surprise. Perhaps he shivers in the cold; certainly the long stem of his *huqqa* seems to.

This painting is obviously neither a straightforward portrait, nor a reverent statement about the mendicant's self-denial and emaciation. One senses that the painter is simply recording and showing the sense of surprise and amusement that he might have experienced while visiting this mendicant and seeing his two aspects.

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81

PLAYFUL FIGURES: THREE FRAGMENTS FROM A DOORFRAME
Stone
10th century; from Bhubaneshwar, Orissa
40 x 20 x 13 cm; 42 x 21 x 8 cm; 28 x 18 x 13 cm
Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneshwar, No. 200, 199, 201

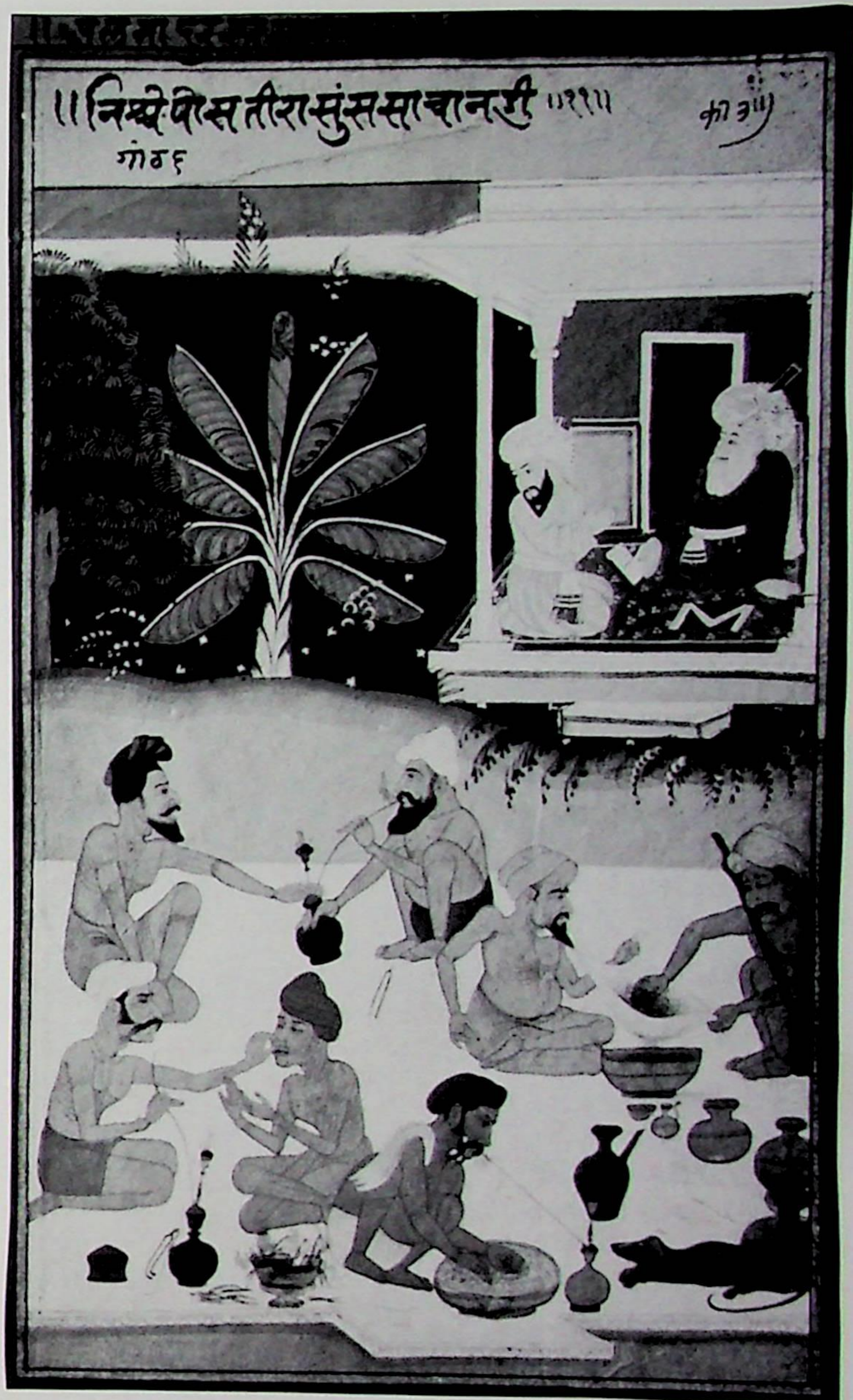
In the fanciful world of endlessly long and meandering lotus rhizomes and wish-fulfilling creepers, the sculptor here introduces some playful figures of young boys who negotiate these difficult paths. Bags and satchels slung on their arms, they enthusiastically go about their task, turning to look at each other at the bends, stopping to touch or fondle shoots and buds, smiling all the while. Even the two pairs of elephants and water buffaloes incorporated in this carved doorframe seem to be in the same carefree mood, nuzzling each other and completely ensconced in the loops made by the creeper. The mood is of abandon, of some kind of celebration. The workmanship is extremely delicate, the stone taking on the aspect of filigree with its intricacy of detail in the hand of the Orissan sculptor. (T.B. & N.H.)



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82

A GROUP OF OPIUM EATERS
From a *Mulla-do-Piaza* series
On front, top border, two lines in Devanagari script; bottom border, one line in Persian
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mewar workshop
Government Museum, Udaipur



The witticisms of Mulla-do-Piaza, believed to have been a rival of the famous Birbal at the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar, are celebrated for their terseness and were made the subject of a long and extensive series of paintings of quite uncommon interest by the painters of Mewar. In each, the venerable Mulla, wearing an enormous turban with a wooden projection on his head, is shown seated in a corner of the painting, generally at the top right, with a disciple facing him: between them is a bookrest with a book, evidently the work containing the sayings of the Mulla. The disciple sits humbly before the Mulla, taking in avidly the truth of the observations of the Master on men and manners.

The saying illustrated in this folio is to the effect that little faith should be placed in the promises of an opium eater, as the opium eater is never in full control of what he says and tends to become expansive in his statements and promises when under the effect of the drug. This gives the painter the occasion to show us a delightful, rakish group of seven men and a dog, all under the influence of opium. We see, thus, two men straining marijuana *(bhang)* in a piece of cloth; two other men take turns on a *huqqa* in which opium is being smoked; another man, smoking the *huqqa*, tweaks the nose of a companion sitting in front; and yet another sifts some seeds while smoking a *huqqa* and fixing a docile crouching dog with his gaze. All the men wear only brief loincloths and all have a dissipated, slightly distant gaze. All are shown with bodies distorted and angular at all the wrong places. The painter seems to have derived much fun from rendering this group, clearly from his own observation. He must have been so familiar with these kind of men, considering the widespread use of opium in the Rajasthan area. He introduces a whole variety of headgear, moustaches, beards and, above all, attitudes in this sharply and shrewdly delineated group. Opium eaters were an obvious and favorite target of the painter's wit, here sharpened further by the direct statement of Mulla-do-Piaza above them.

The usual Mewar conventions are all there: the little chamber with a flat red wall, a stylized mango tree, a plantain, flowering sprigs, and the like. But what gives this entire series remarkable interest is the manner in which the painter, using the Mulla's sayings, holds up a mirror to his own society. There is very little in the range of Indian painting that comes close to so direct a statement on its times as this unexpected and delightful series.

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83

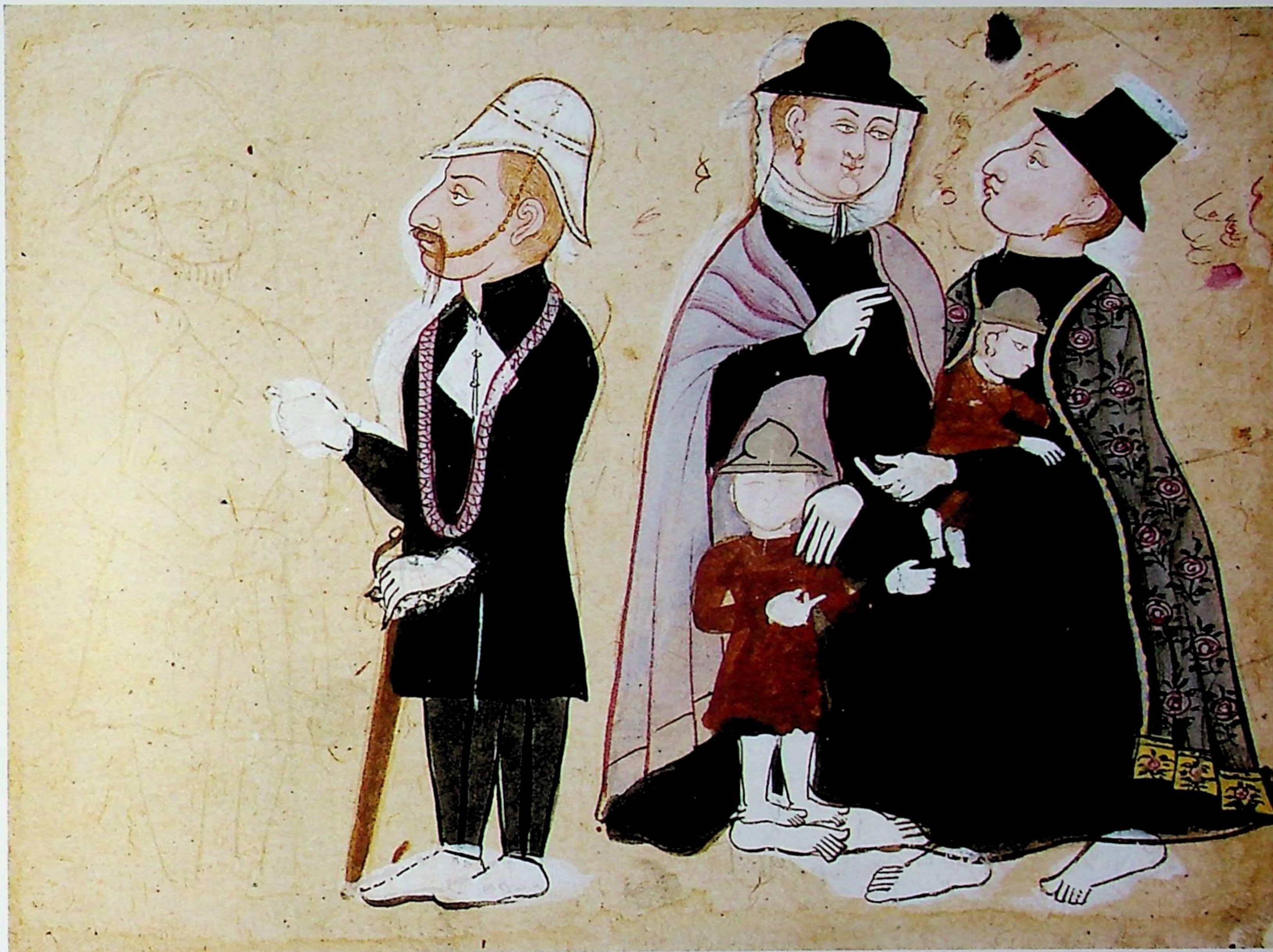
THE HYPOCRITES: PAKHANDI FORMS OF INDRA
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 114
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Udaipur, No. 1527–86

This wonderfully observed group of ascetics, devotees, and god-men of all kinds belongs, surprisingly, to an episode described in the nineteenth chapter of the fourth book of *Bhagavata Purana*. Prithu, the great king, celebrates his dominion over the earth with the performance of one hundred *ashvamedha* (horse) sacrifices. But Indra, jealous as always of anyone capable of competing with his glory, decides to intervene and walks off with the horse that is so significant a part of the *ashvamedha* sacrifice. Hastening with the stolen horse through the air, he is espied by a sage who informs Prithu's son Vijitashva of Indra's deed. Indra is pursued but suddenly changes appearance, becoming a holy man complete with ashes besmeared on his body and straggling locks. Prithu's son is deceived, does not suspect him of the deed, and lets him go. But Indra, persisting, repeats his efforts, constantly changing from one disguise to another. Finally Vijitashva sees through Indra's game and subdues him. But the text says that the hypocritical forms that Indra assumed were taken over by all kinds of men who began roaming the earth as *nagas, raktambaras, kapalikas* and others of that ilk. Clearly the *Purana* is making a comment on holy men outside the pale of religion, certainly outside the pale of the cult of Vishnu, and warns devotees against them.

The painter, referring to this episode, presents a marvelously studied group of seven men of different appearances and inclinations who pass as holy or devout. There is a Natha *yogi*, a dark-bodied *sannyasi*, a Suthra, an Aghori, and others. The painter's comment, sharp and acerbic, is directed against the kind of hypocrites he knows from his own surroundings; there is no caricature involved.

Literature
See No. 114.

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84

EUROPEAN FIGURES WITH CHILDREN
Unfinished painting on paper
Rajasthan, 2nd quarter of the 19th century; from a Kota or Nathdwara workshop
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 4292

Identifying these figures with any precision would be difficult, but there can be little doubt that all those on this leaf from an artist's sketch-book (including the one in faint outline at left) are Europeans. The short-statured man with a walrus moustache and outsize hat, wearing a garland around his neck and resting his hand on the hilt of a short sword, is perhaps some minor functionary attached to the British Resident's office. The two figures at right, in long cloaks and draped shawls and wearing hats, are very likely European women attached to some local convent. One of them carries a child on her arm, while the other rests a hand on another standing child.

For all its evident haste, and for all the relative coarseness of drawing, the work draws attention to the air of self-importance that most Europeans, even those of ordinary station, assumed in India. The artist has not caricatured the figures, but he does want us to see that in their smugness and somewhat odd appearance these characters are amusing.

Stuart C. Welch has published some comparable drawings of Europeans from Kota. The "Company" characters that we see in the present work might have been among the first to be seen at Kota, the first Rajasthani state to enter into a formal alliance with the East India Company.

Literature

Stuart Cary Welch, *Room for Wonder*, New York, 1978, No. 61.

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85

KUBERA
Stone
2nd century; from the Mathura area; Uttar Pradesh
78 x 46 x 23 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 78.522

For all the importance that he occupies in the scheme of things, at least for men—he is after all, the god of wealth and riches—Kubera is often at the receiving end of the sculptor's wit. He is mercurial in temper and likes the good life, as is evidenced by his fondness for drink like many of the *yakshas* whom he leads, but the sculptor goes beyond the strict needs of the subject in presenting Kubera in a comical light. He is understandably portrayed as being heavy around the middle—a sign of comfortable living—but he does not really have to be presented as a Kumbhodara, "possessing a belly like an earthen pot," as here, and also in the much better-known large Kubera image, also from the Kushan period. Here, having decided to present him as an amusing figure, the sculptor adds other touches: the cloth band that barely manages to hold the belly in place, the besotted eyes, the arms (now broken) which must have been raised above his head, as if in an indolent gesture.

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KARUNA: THE PATHETIC SENTIMENT

करुणरस

KARUNA ARISES FROM the enduring emotional state of sorrow (*shoka*). The determinants (*vibhavas*) spoken of in the context of *shoka* include such things as "affliction under a curse, separation from dear ones, loss of wealth, death, captivity, flight, accidents or any other misfortune." The consequents (*anubhavas*) which, according to Bharata, are appropriate to the state are "shedding tears, lamentation, dryness of the mouth, change of color, dropping limbs, being out of breath, loss of memory. . . ." The complementary emotional states (*vyabhicharibhavas*) linked with sorrow cover a wide range from "indifference, languor and anxiety" to "yearning, excitement, delusion, fainting, sadness, dejection, illness, inactivity, insecurity, epilepsy, fear, indolence, death, paralysis, tremor, change of color, weeping, loss of voice, and the like."

There is a great deal of discussion on the relationship of the pathetic sentiment to the state of pathos that love encompasses. Since love in separation (*vipralambha*) is elaborately treated in texts, and as many as ten different conditions exist for lovers separated from their beloved—conditions treated as pathetic by writers on *ars amatoria*—writers on the subject evidently felt a need for making clear distinctions. Many commentators and authors generally agree that sorrow arising from love in separation is distinguished from that leading to the pathetic sentiment because in the former state one anticipates reunion; the sorrow experienced does not imply finality, however deep it momentarily might be. The pathetic sentiment proper, on the other hand, deals with sorrow caused by permanent separation through misfortune. As Bharata puts it:

> The pathetic sentiment relates to a condition of despair, owing to the affliction under a curse, death, or captivity, while the erotic sentiment based on separation relates to a condition of retaining optimism arising out of yearning and anxiety. Hence, the pathetic sentiment and the erotic sentiment in separation differ from each other.

As enunciated and interpreted here, the distinction appears valid, but departures are made in its rendering in the arts. Apart from the fact that the pathetic sentiment is not a favored theme in many literary works, and visual works depicting it are not encouraged to show private, intimate settings, the sculptors and painters frequently address themselves to the milder aspects of pathos and seem to treat them as falling in the category of Karuna. A number of works included here would be seen by rigorous theorists as falling in the category of love in separation; but as if by common consensus, pathos arising out of temporary but painful separation in love came to form a central part of Karuna, although at an earlier time they would have been excluded.

Another category of works falling under Karuna focuses on compassion (*daya* or *anukampa*). The sorrow that a *bodhisattva* takes away from men and women and makes a part of himself comes close to Karuna as seemingly understood by the sculptor and the painter. Thus, among works in this section, departures from the strict demands of theory have been done in accordance with the authority of usage, if not of doctrine.

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THE LAMENTATION OF LAURIK, THE HERO
From the same *Laur-Chanda* series as No. 2
Gouache on paper
Sultanate, 1st half of the 16th century
21 x 15 cm
Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, No. 57.1/62

As the heroine Chanda lies lifeless under a tree in a bleak landscape, Laurik, the hero of romance, becomes utterly distraught and laments. She has been bitten by a serpent and now lies dead, the text says, all this having happened while he had been briefly absent during their unhappy wanderings. The sword and the shield tied to the tree trunk are apparently his. Like Laurik, we do not see the serpent but only guess at its recent presence—the curled form lying at the foot of Chanda's pallet is an unrolled turban, Laurik's fallen from his head in this moment of grief. The painter establishes the grief in many ways: the physical appearance of the hero, hair hanging loose, body bent and agonized, arms outstretched, as well as the fallen turban, the tree devoid of birds or any signs of life, the inert form of Chanda. To suggest unequivocally that Chanda is dead, not sleeping, the painter rendered her eyes without pupils, a well-established convention. With the background still full of "golden-hook" decorative patterns and the spandrels of the arch of the composition containing arabesques, the painter is not freeing himself from the decorative conventions he follows in the rest of the manuscript. The backgrounds are only varied: they are never left bare. (The narrative goes on to say that Chanda did not die but was cured of the snakebite by a wandering and helpful physician.)

Literature
See No. 2.

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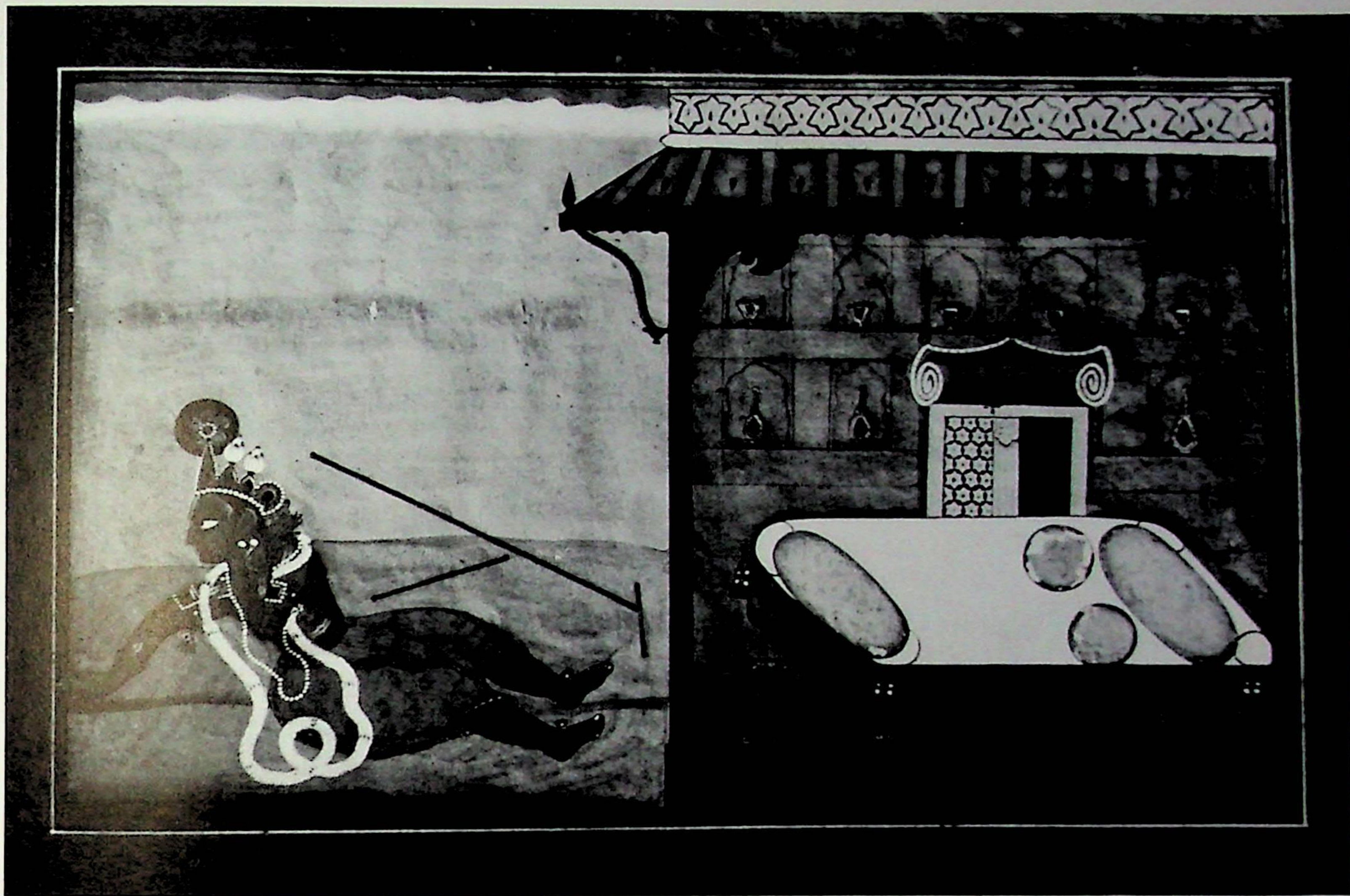
87

WOMAN IN SORROW
Terracotta
2nd–3rd century; from Ghoshi, Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh
15 cm
State Museum, Lucknow, No. G–348

This slightly awkward archaic-looking head evidently belonged to a secular figure possessing no ritual or religious connotation. The fact that she conspicuously covers her left eye with her left hand has been taken to suggest that some kind of eye ailment is represented here, but it is far more likely that this rough-hewn image simply renders a state of sorrow. The lips parted in some pain, the large staring right eye, and the face-covering gesture indicate inner turmoil rather than a physical ailment. The excessive emphasis on the gesture is not surprising in the context of the style in which this work fits, for directness of statement seems to be of the essence. The lady, the sculptor seems to suggest, is of high birth, indicated by her elaborate coiffure and the jewelry that one sees so clearly even in this fragment.

The modeling is simple to the point of coarseness, and there is a strong folk element in the work. But the message is conveyed with clarity and the image is effective.

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88

KRISHNA'S DESOLATION
From the same *Gita Govinda* series as No. 46
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1730; by Manak of Guler
21 x 30.7 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. I–41

In the canto entitled "Lotus-Eyed Krishna Longing for Love," Jayadeva narrates the torments that Krishna suffers when Radha, offended and proud, comes to him no longer. Using her friend as his messenger, in these dramatic passages Krishna urges her to go to Radha and repeat his words to her. Tell Radha, he begs the *sakhi,* that when "bees swarm, buzzing sounds of love," he covers his ears. "Cool moon rays scorch him / threatening death . . . / inflicting pain night after night." He urges her to go on to say:

> He dwells in dense forest wilds,
> Rejecting his luxurious home.
> He tosses on his bed of earth,
> Frantically calling your name.
> Wildflower-garlanded Krishna
> Suffers in your desertion, friend.

The painter stays quite close to the details: the reflected luxurious house, the tossing on the bed of earth, the wildflower garland; but he leaves out his new dwelling in dense forest wilds. The omission is significant, for the painter makes some allowance for exaggeration in Krishna's speech. He might also have entertained doubt that if he were to introduce the forest in this painting, too, it might be mistaken for their grove of love, thus leading to a misreading of the import of the verses. But if he leaves out something, he also adds, as he interprets Krishna's desolate state. The cowherd's staff and his beloved flute, which lie at odd angles, as if thrown by Krishna in a fit of despair, underscore the mood; so do the tensing of the arms, the curling of the garland and the whole stance of Krishna's body. The empty chamber, with its vacant bed and half-open door, completes the picture of desolation. A hint, but just a hint, of an inner struggle appears on Krishna's lotus-face, ordinarily so fresh and radiant.

Literature
See No. 46.

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RAMA PINING FOR SITA
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Kangra workshop
26.5 x 33 cm
Collection of Mr. Gopi Krishna Kanoria, Patna, No. VK 120

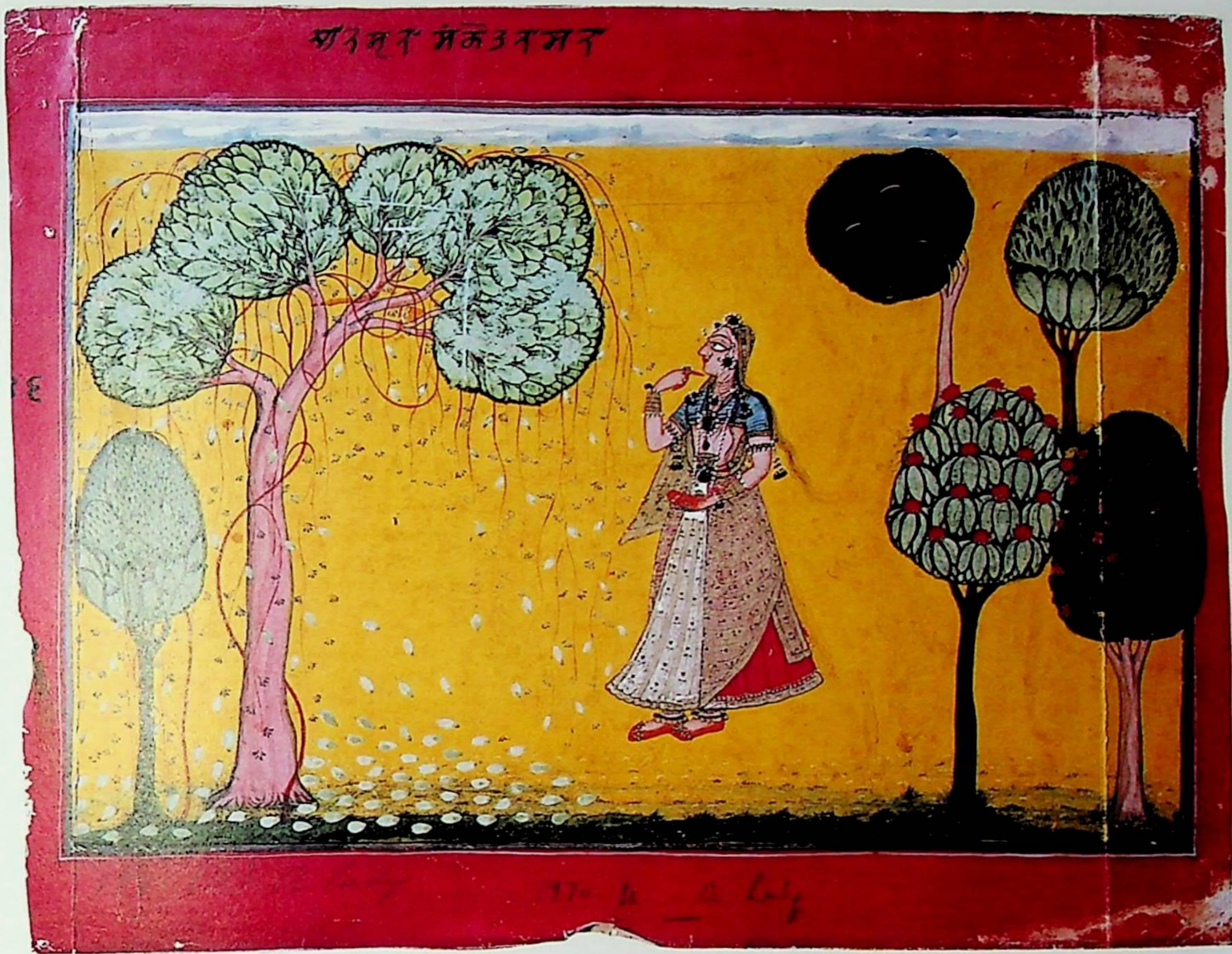
Since he is the very embodiment of *dhairya*, patience, it is not often that we see Rama expressing emotion outwardly. When his consort Sita is abducted, Rama is devastated, for suddenly life loses its meaning for him. In the descriptions of the time that he spent with his brother Lakshmana in the forest, not yet having a clue to the whereabouts of Sita, the poet of the epic introduces passages of great beauty which describe Rama's sorrow. When the rains come, especially, and parched earth turns green again, and sap begins to flow once more through all those living trees and vines, Rama's ache is heightened further and becomes nearly unbearable. There are signs of joy all around him: birds fly in a formation in the sky, lotuses blossom in the ponds, trees sway, the pea-hen just waits for her mate's call, and clouds fill earth and sky with their noble rumble. But Rama can think only of Sita.

The painter shows us Rama and Lakshmana seated inside a cave among the rocky mountains. Rama is identified as much by his dress as an exile—long matted hair, antelope-skin around his loins and his blue complexion—as from his attribute, the bow and arrow seen hanging from the roof of the cave. Facing him is his brother and companion Lakshmana, marginally better dressed than Rama but also in exile in the forest and wearing a headgear of wild leaves. He seems to be expostulating with Rama, as if holding out an assurance that they will eventually succeed in locating Sita; but the hopelessness of the situation, at least in this moment, is emphasized by the gesture and the stance of despair that Rama strikes as he leans back against a rock.

It is of interest to see the painter manipulate and emphasize the same elements in nature differently here than he would in another painting expressive of love in union. Here they turn into a source of ache and nostalgia rather than things in which united lovers take delight. The key to the understanding of the picture is the figure of Rama.

The work does not possess the verse or the fineness of line that many Pahari paintings of this period exhibit, but it still has the power to move the viewer and make him absorb the state of mind of the principal characters in it.

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"WHEN CLIMBERS SHED THEIR LEAVES"
From the same *Rasamanjari* series as No. 39
On verso, Sanskrit verse; on front, *anushyana sanketa nashana* (the *nayika* who is unhappy at her place of tryst being ruined) in Takri characters on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
24 x 33 cm
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 1970 (N)

In a somewhat elaborate introduction to the kind of *nayika* called *anushyana*, the poet explains that she is the one who sorrows because the secret trysting place with the lover is no longer usable. In Shringara literature, the place is generally a grove, a crumbling temple, or a ruin. When it is no longer usable either because it has been discovered, or destroyed for some reason, sorrow ensues. There are three kinds of heroine in this circumstance. This painting visualizes the first kind, as described by the poet:

> The sweet-eyed *nayika* turned pale as the leaves of a palmyra tree when she found out that the dense clove climbers which grew at their trysting-place had started shedding their leaves at the advent of the month of Chaitra [February-March].

The dense growth of the fragrant climber *lavangalata* evidently shielded the lovers from prying eyes. Their secret meetings went on for a long time, but the woman had not taken into account the unusual fact that this climber sheds its leaves not in autumn but at the arrival of spring—hence the gesture of amazement and despair, the finger prominently raised to the chin, and the subdued, pained look in the eyes.

The painter had no idea of what a *lavangalata* climber looks like, for it does not grow in the Pahari hills. He therefore depicts a climber from his own experience. Nor is this the way climbers shed their leaves, but that is of no consequence: what is important is that this botanical liberty serves the purpose of symbolizing the state of the mind of the *nayika*. The firm, assertive tree forms do represent a grove in general terms, but they may also represent the unchanging world in which the lovers have no interest. The unlikely colors of the trunks and the shapes of their crowns also have no basis in fact; what interests the painter and the poet is the emotion that the *nayika*, representing both herself and her lover, feels.

Literature
See No. 39.

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91

"THE NIGHT PIERCES ME LIKE A SWORD"
From the same *Rasamanjari* series as No. 39
On verso, Sanskrit verse; on front, *udvega dasha* (the state of agitation) in Takri characters on top border
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
24 x 33 cm
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 1970 (L)

In separation, the state of the hero or of the heroine can pass from anxiety and remembrance with pain to recalling the qualities of the beloved with a heavy heart, to deep agitation, as here. Despair seems to take over, and the lover speaks of himself:

> The moon affects me like a poisonous root; the very season of spring has turned into an oppressive elephant that uproots gentle thoughts like lotuses from a pond: this night pierces me like a sword wielded by Kamadeva, god of love. What, O what, am I to do?
>
> (128)

Unusual for this series, which revels in rich saturated areas of color, the entire painting seems to be dominated by a cool white against which the dark blue color of Krishna's body and his flaming orange *dhoti* stand out sharply. This is not by any means the only painting in which the moon is shown in the sky, but the pale white light it here seems to shed is an uncommon touch. The foliage is also atypical: those thick-stemmed, round-topped trees that figure so prominently in other paintings of this series yield here to tall, spiky flowering plants which send up their thin branches "like Kama's sharp, piercing swords." Surprisingly, the lotus pond is omitted, for ordinarily the painter delights in rendering lotuses, but his decision seems to be not to interpret each detail literally—one can visualize a painter like Sahibdin of the Mewar *Rasikapriya* doing this enthusiastically—but rather to capture the essence of the situation. He uses with great effect the eloquence of gestures, as the man raises one hand despairingly into the air and with the other points to his forehead as if bemoaning his fate, blaming the stars for reducing him to his present state.

Literature
See No. 39.

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92

THE DISTRACTED STATE OF KRISHNA'S BELOVEDS
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 51
Gouache on paper
Pahari, last quarter of the 18th century
22.5 x 30.5 cm
Collection of Smt. Madhuri Desai, Bombay; on loan to the L.D. Museum, Ahmedabad

When to humble their pride Krishna disappears from the midst of his beloved *gopis*, whom he has led to the bank of the Yamuna, there is much consternation. All else is present—the full moon, the verdant grove with its flowering creepers and luxuriant trees. Only Krishna, who endowed it all with life, is gone. Distracted and anxious, the *gopis* search for him, and wander about among the trees under which he had sported with them. Of the sacred *tulsi* plant they ask: "O tulsi, greatly beloved of Krishna, has he come and met you today? From his body he never keeps you the least separate." They envy the *asvattha*, the *plaksha*, the *nyagrodha* trees, for they must indeed have seen Krishna. Some, noticing Krishna's footprints, distinctive because of the sacred marks on the sole, try to track him; others address disjointed questions to a group of young deer. The women of Vraja thus cry out in their separation from Krishna.

The painter of this remarkable series shows an inspired understanding. He renders in part what the text says in this portion of the *Purana* called the *Rasa Panchadhyayi*, but he goes beyond it to interpret states of mind. He also provides a bridge to what follows, for he shows one of the *gopis* who, having given up, begins to divert herself by recalling and imitating Krishna's actions, by playing upon his bewitching flute. In a later painting in the series, the *gopis* begin more enthusiastically to re-enact Krishna's many deeds—his killing of Putana the demon, his uprooting twin trees to release two incarcerated spirits, lifting Mount Govardhana, quelling the serpent Kaliya. A little later, of course, Krishna returns.

The limpid clarity of this group of paintings from this very series has led to their being described as being in the hand of the "Master of the Moonlight," undoubtedly also a member of the Seu-Nainsukh family.

Literature
See No. 51.

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93

WHEN KRISHNA DISAPPEARS
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
32 x 29 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 58.18/18

Suddenly, amid joy and surging passion, a mood of desolation arises. Krishna, having left the group of his many beloveds, is with a greatly favored *gopi* in a corner of the forest on this dazzling moonlit night. Together they savor the beauties of the night, and play the many games of courting lovers. This *gopi*, so sure of herself and of Krishna's attachment to her, asks him to carry her on his back. He invites her to reach out for him, and then disappears suddenly, mysteriously. She is left alone, and as the others, searching for Krishna, reach this corner on the bank of the river, they find her utterly desolate, heaving deep sighs and barely able to contain her tears. She gives the others an account of what had transpired—how her arrogance had been humbled by Krishna.

It is this beautiful narrative in Book Ten of the *Bhagavata Purana* that the painter depicts. The leaf is representative of the merits of this dazzlingly beautiful series in every aspect, and this painter once again demonstrates a deep understanding. The weeping willow at the far left, the sandy beach that seems to hold a river, are brought in with great deliberation, as is the unusual rendering of the trailing tree at the right.

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94

HEAD OF THE FASTING BUDDHA
Dark grey schist
2nd–3rd century; from the Gandhara region, now in Pakistan
26 x 15 x 15 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 735



The texts recount at great length the trials and experimentation with truth that Gautama went through before he attained enlightenment. When he leaves the teacher Rudraka and the path of meditation, Gautama decides to mortify himself by self-infliction of the most rigorous deprivations of food, engaging in nearly impossible bodily contortions, bearing the scorching heat of the sun and the fires that he lit around himself. His conclusion, arrived at earlier, that endeavors such as this are pointless, make this episode a little puzzling, but perhaps he finds it necessary to go through this regime to extinguish all traces of attachment to worldly life before moving on to a higher realm. In any case, texts such as the *Lalitavistara* give striking descriptions of the state to which Gautama reduces himself. Hiding under a rock, he becomes a living corpse, a mere skeleton. One text attributes to the Buddha himself the statement that at this time "all his limbs resembled knotty rattans, his torso the shell of a crab, and his eyes stars reflected at the bottom of an almost dried-out well."

In general, the Indian artist does not pay much attention to this episode in Buddha's life. But in Gandhara, with its strong interest in naturalistic rendering and anatomical accuracy, some sculptors turned with enthusiasm to the subject. This emaciated head, which evidently once belonged to a large seated image, is the sculptor's statement of that condition. The face is covered in paper-thin skin, the eyes are sunken in cavernous sockets, facial bones protrude, cheeks are shrivelled, the lips bear the marks of an inner struggle dominated by remarkable resolve. The forehead remains broad but brittle; the wavy hair is pushed back, covering the large cranial protuberance (*ushnisha*), that indicates this is none other than he who is to become the Buddha. Veins throb on his temples and the neck is reduced to a bundle of bones, but the Buddha remains unmoved: such is the suggestion. But the viewer, taking in this rendering of self-denial and of bodily suffering, does not remain unaffected.

Some remarkable images of this very subject, also from Gandhara, have survived: there is one from Sikri in the Lahore Museum and another from Takht-i-Bahi, now in Peshawar. In each there is a quite pronounced feeling, a certain Indian-ness finally asserting itself over the Hellenistic ideals which had inspired so much of Gandharan work.

Literature

Eliky Zannas, "Two Gandharan Masterpieces," *Chhavi I,* Benares, 1971, H–309–15, pls. 25–26; Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.* Washington, D.C., 1985, No. 17.

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95

LAMENTATIONS OF THE DEATH OF THE BUDDHA
Grey schist
3rd century; from the Gandhara region
35 x 60 cm
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 2402

The departure of Buddha, when he "went out like a flame that goes out for lack of fuel," was no ordinary event, but it is not a subject to which the sculptor working in the mainstream of the Indian tradition often turns. For the Gandhara sculptor, however, it becomes a great and recurring theme. For him, the scene showing the death and cremation of the Buddha must have come as a natural climax in the narrative of his life. But its renderings vary a great deal, even within Gandhara. Here the sculptor falls back upon his Greco-Roman memories as it were, showing the body of the Buddha encased in a coffin. There is no mistaking the long horizontal shape and three prominent hinges. Of even greater interest is the overt expression of grief which, in the view of the sculptor, should be the whole point behind rendering such a scene. Between two trees, which raise their branches heavenward like helpless hands, are two *bhikshus*, evidently the Buddha's disciples. Behind them, centrally placed, the bearded figure of Vajrapani the *bodhisattva* holds his outsized weapon prominently in his right hand. The old, emaciated monk at left protectively spreads both arms over the coffin, while the younger monk at right places one arm on it and raises the other toward him in a gesture of grief. The older monk's facial expression is emphasized, as is that of Vajrapani; furrows of pain and sadness are writ large. At the extreme right, another monk, probably Mahakashyapa, his face also lined with anxiety, raises his right hand in a gesture of reassurance or offering solace; but the kingly-looking figure at the extreme left, leaning against the parapet on which the coffin is placed, is submerged in grief.

As compared with other Gandhara reliefs of the same theme, this sculptor uses considerable restraint.

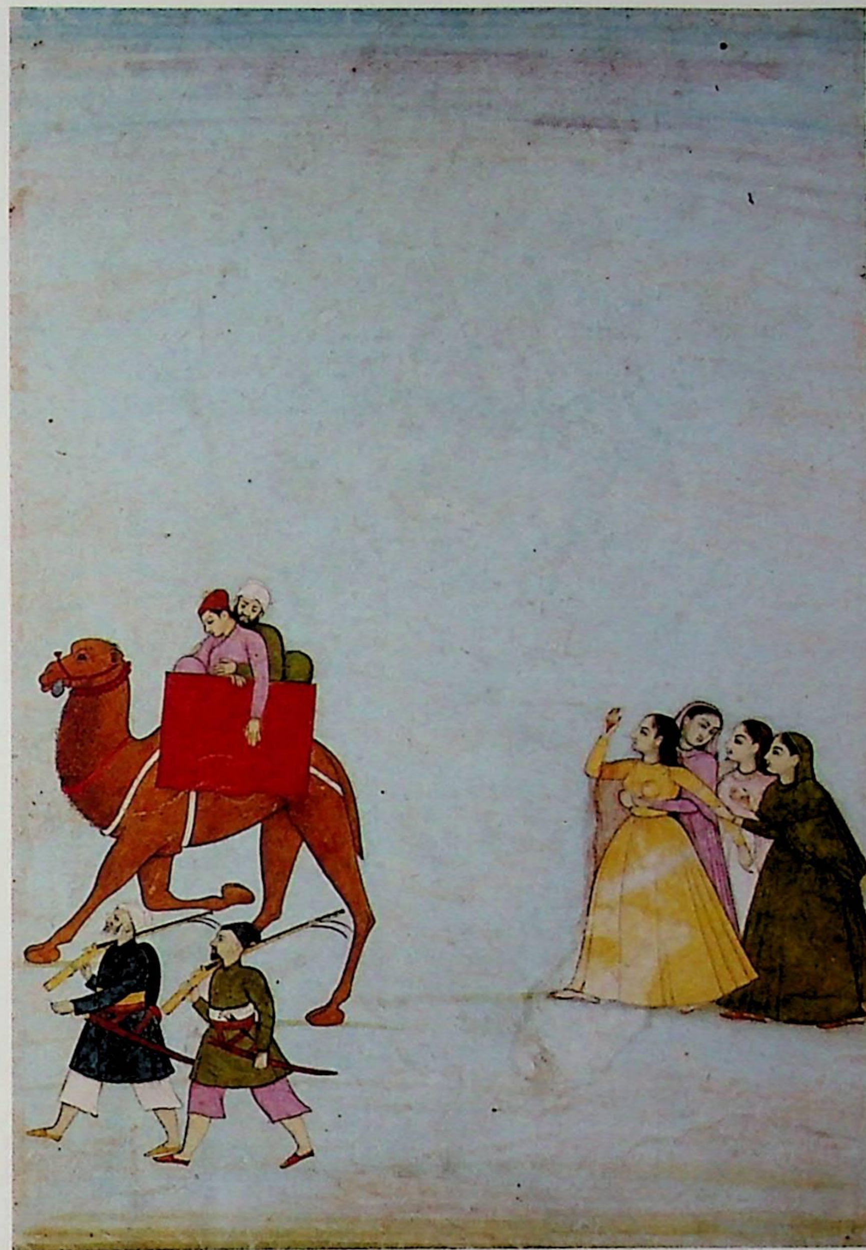
Literature

Prem Goswamy, "Catalogue Raisonné of Gandhara Sculptures in the Chandigarh Museum" (unpublished doctoral dissertation), Chandigarh, 1980.

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96

SASSI LAMENTS FOR PUNNU, HER LOVER
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 51–127/22



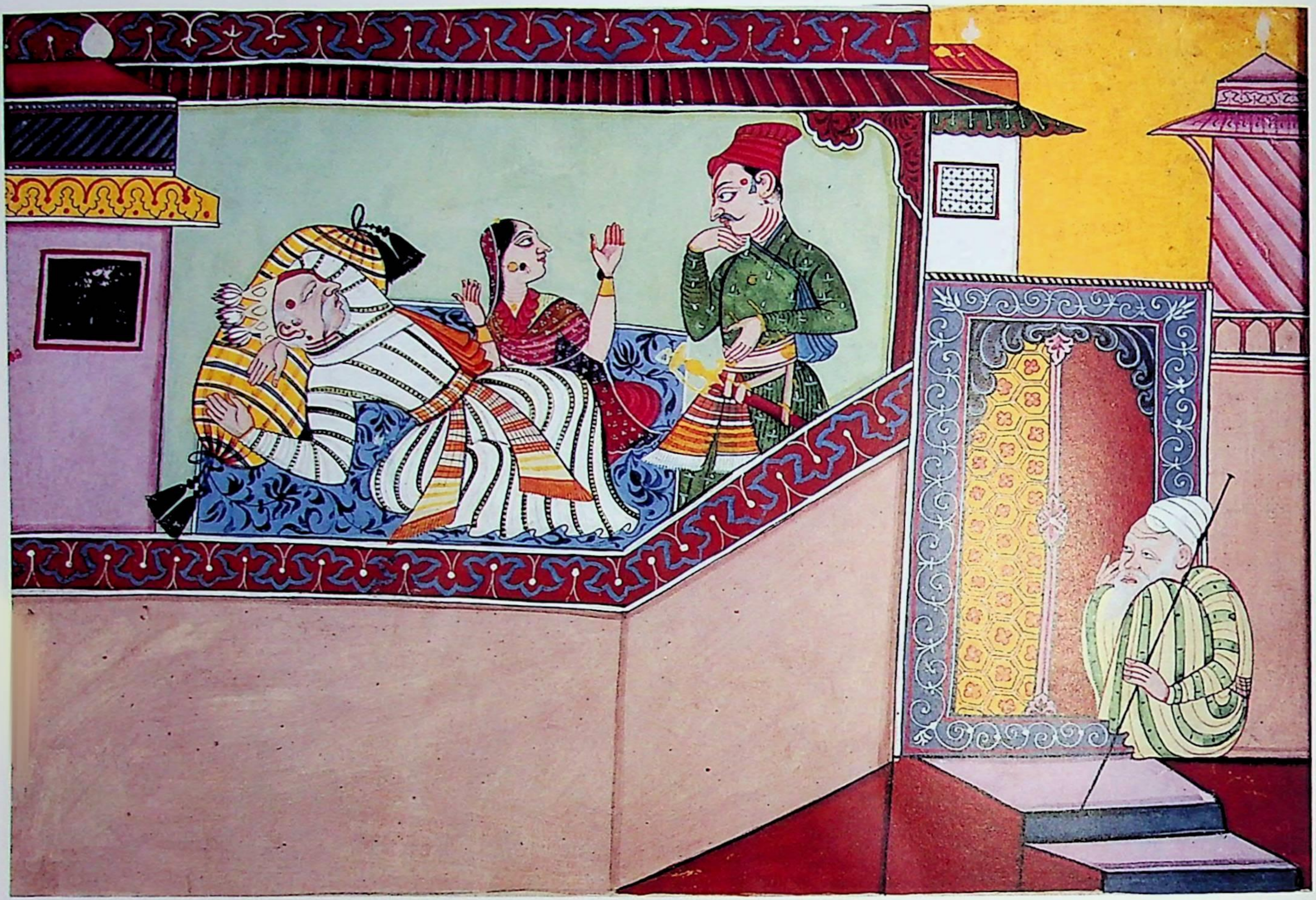
From yet another folk tale of ill-fated lovers, later put to verse by several poets, the heroine Sassi and Punnu, her lover, are household names in the Punjab. From the plains to which the story belongs, the tale reached the Pahari area and was admired and sung perhaps for the beauty of its pathos. Sassi, deserted by her parents because of an unhappy prophecy and brought up by a Muslim washerman, grows in her foster parents' humble home to become a great beauty. Punnu, son of a prosperous chief, falls desperately in love with her. He comes to her village disguised as a merchant and the two are secretly married, for fear of opposition from his own family to this poor match. But the lovers' joy is short-lived. When Punnu's family receives news that their son has married far below their status, they arrive unannounced; when he is asleep, perhaps drugged, they carry him off on camelback, leaving Sassi lamenting and desolate. Later, Sassi sets out on foot to look for her lover but meets with a misadventure and dies, "the earth opening to receive her." In death she is followed by her lover, and the two are united in the grave.

Not many paintings of the Sassi-Punnu theme are known, either from the Punjab plains or the Pahari region. But this chance survival tells the high point of the tale, the separation of the lovers, with marked delicacy. The senseless state in which Punnu is carried off on camelback, his head slightly bent and lolling, the pain of Sassi whose friends are barely able to restrain her, are delineated with feeling. Particularly affecting is the hopeless state of Sassi as she raises an arm in a futile gesture of protest, recall, lament. There is great refinement in the line and the workmanship strongly suggests the hand of a member of the Nainsukh family.

Literature

O.C. Gangoly, "Sashi and Punnu," *Rupam*, No. 30, April 1927; Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958.

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97

DASARATHA FALLS INTO A SWOON
Gouache on paper
Mewar, 17th century
22.1 x 31.6 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 1105

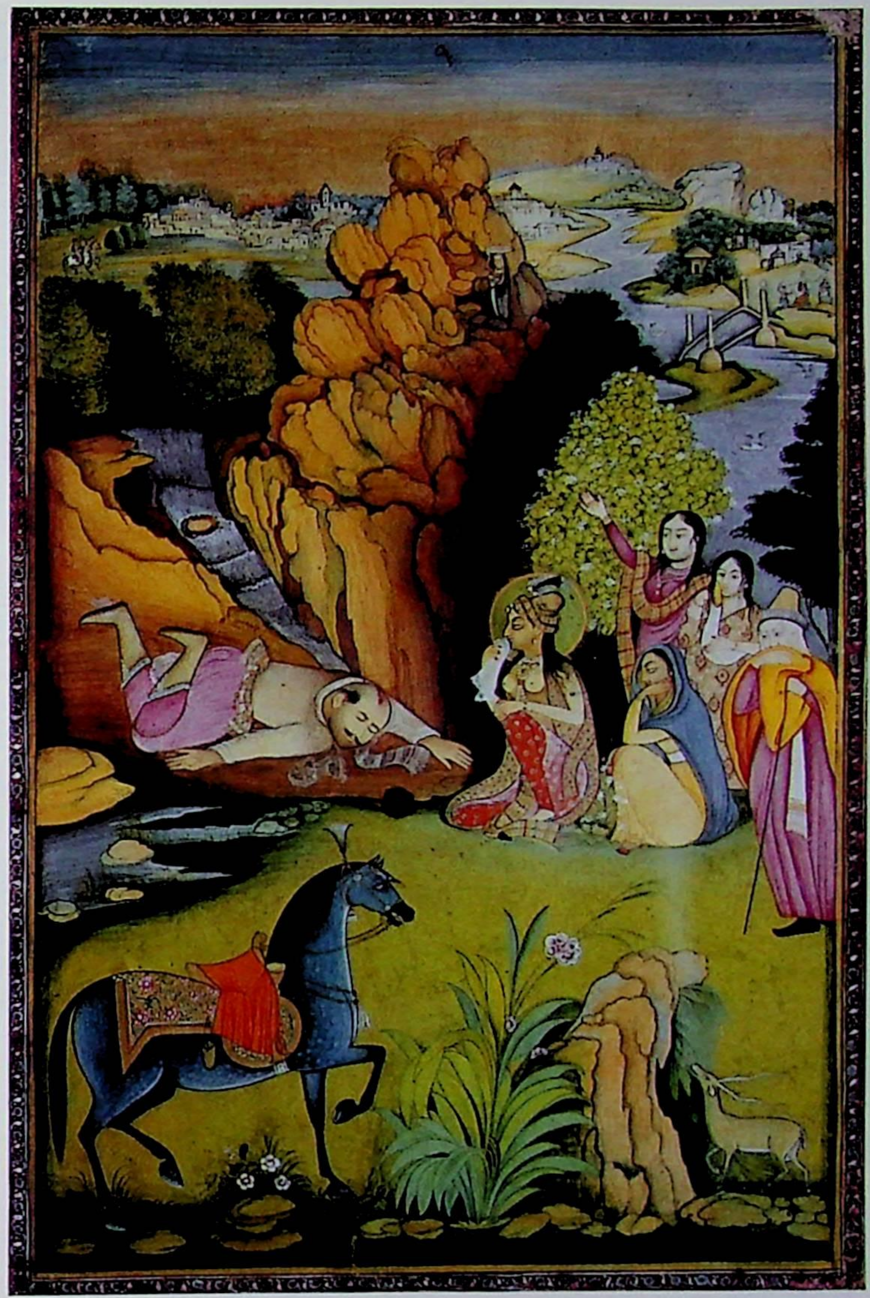
Joyous preparations for Rama's coronation turn to tragedy at the moment depicted in this painting. The scene is taken from the great epic, the *Ramayana*. King Dasaratha, Rama's aged father, has just been tricked by his jealous wife, Kaikeyi, into promising to send Rama into exile. Because he is a king he must keep his word, although it means hurting his favorite son and depriving him of the kingship he was to gain on the very next day. Overcome by grief at the prospect of being parted from his son, Dasaratha faints dead away. Never to fully regain his health, the old man dies a few days later.

In this rendering of the episode, Dasaratha lies sprawled across his bed with his eyes half closed and his hands thrown helplessly behind him. The stripes of his garment swirl around him wildly, reflecting the chaotic state of his mind and the sudden movement of his fall. The colors of the entire scene are subdued and cool, suggestive of hopeless sorrow's quiet isolation. (P.K.)

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98

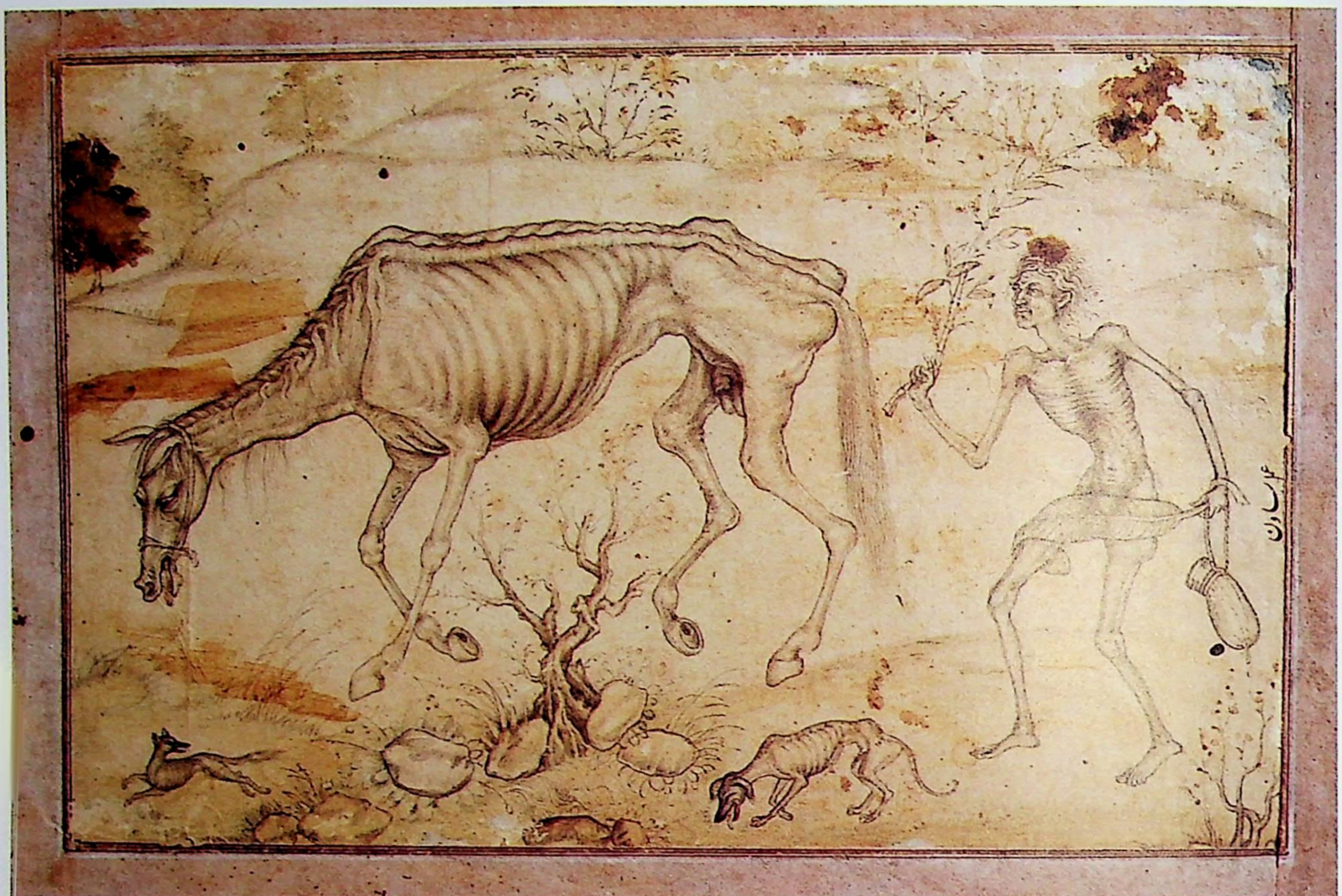
FARHAD KILLS HIMSELF
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Jodhpur workshop
Birla Academy of Art, Calcutta, No. A–160



The names of Shirin, the high-born lady, and Farhad, her lover, figure prominently among the pairs of legendary, tragic lovers in Persian literature. Farhad is the truly pathetic figure in the story, however, for he is willing to do anything at all to obtain the hand of his beloved. Impoverished and set the impossible task of cutting a canal through a rocky mountain with his bare hands and a pick-axe, he accepts the challenge. But this spirit proves of no avail, for when he receives the news of his beloved being married off, after years of hacking away at heartless stones he is unable to bear the shock and kills himself with the same axe that he had been using in his nearly sisyphean enterprise.

The story of Shirin and Farhad, for all its popularity in literature and in folk tales, is infrequent in Indian painting. Thus, this Jodhpur leaf comes as somewhat of a surprise, for not many Islamic subjects are associated with work from that state. The painting does not have the quality of coloring or innovative composition that imparts distinction to some Jodhpur work, ordinarily somewhat weak and repetitive in subject matter. But it shows a certain feeling, a measure of understanding for the tragic denouement of this story.

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99

AN EMACIATED HORSE AND GROOM
Inscribed in Persian, *aml-i-Basawan* (the work of Basawan)
Brush drawing and washes on paper
Mughal, last quarter of the 16th century
27 x 36.5 cm
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 307/581

There is no comic intention in this work. Even though in Persian poetry we do come upon amusing descriptions of old nags whose "veins stick out over their bodies like lines on a calendar," and who generally serve as mounts for derelict characters, this drawing is a serious study of the straits in which man and beast alike can find themselves. The gourd-carrying naked dervish-like master of the horse is reduced to a skeleton with bony arms, legs, and ribcage as he goads the miserable animal with a tree branch he carries like a whip in his right hand. The frame of the animal as he pants and totters along echoes that of his master, knobby joints and desiccated coat making a remarkable pattern. Yet another figure, that of the dog belonging to the dervish, is introduced at the bottom, but he is no better off than either his master or the larger beast. The only sprightly figure in the drawing is that of the fox as it runs in front, almost mocking the starving trio with its own agility. Every other element, the bare landscape, the gnarled and leafless bushes, sprigs of dried grass, serves to deepen the mood of despair.

This "profound, painful drawing," as Cary Welch terms it, is attributed by the inscription to Basawan, the great Akbari painter. This seems to be believable judging from the other known works of Basawan, including the portrait of a corpulent and seminaked man in the India Office Library. The hand of Basawan again can be seen in the manner in which he makes a closely observed study like this rise above its own time and place to become universal.

An inscription at the back of the painting says that this is "the likeness of Qais son of Amir, better known as Majnun, in the hand of Basawan."

Literature

S.C. Welch, *Indian Drawings and Painted Sketches*, New York, 1976, No. 8; Nihar Ranjah Ray, *Mughal Court Painting*, Calcutta, 1975, pl. IV.

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100

MAJNUN IN THE COMPANY OF WILD ANIMALS
Brush drawing and wash on paper
Mughal, 1614; by Masood
24 x 15 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 58.20/29



Of all the episodes from the tragic romance of Laila, "beautiful as the dark night," and Majnun, the subject of so many poetic versions of the story (the most famous being from the *Khamseh* of Nizami), the painters often picked this theme as the very embodiment of the hapless lover's desolate state. Betrayed by fate, mocked by all and sundry, crazed by the loss of his love, Majnun renounces the world and takes to the wilderness. Emaciated and unkempt, there he lives all by himself, all hope "extinguished like a flame." With his mind in this state, he neither fears nor expects anything. In this heartless setting, wild animals gather around him, for no human company is fit for "the Mad One" any more.

The painter's style is expressed in his depiction of rocky formations, a few trees, some running water, a vignette of a distant town in a far corner. But even within this conventional format, he manipulates the elements to underscore the mood. The single mountain goat standing on a ledge in the rocks as if watching out for someone, the isolated tree in the top right-hand corner, a mendicant's place instead of a city view in the corner, angry-looking roots of the tree, serve the theme well. Then there are animals that look up at him, a little puzzled, a little sympathetic, all equally understanding but none of them truly unfriendly. In the center of the finely drawn picture of course is the skeleton-like figure of Majnun himself, a bare breath's distance away from his end, his devastated face a remarkable study in despair and pain.

A drawing of this very theme and very close to this work in feeling and form is in the Binney collection. The studies of the animals there, as here, are very assured, in the tradition of the great animal paintings of this period from the Mughal court. Here, however, the interest in them is of a different kind.

Literature

Published in O.P. Sharma, *Indian Miniature Painting*, Brussels, 1974, pl. 5; *Inde: cinq milles ans d'art*, Paris, 1978, No. 130.

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101

A WOMAN WITH HER FACE HIDDEN
Sandstone
2nd century B.C.; from Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
15.5 x 23.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 60.474

It has been suggested that this little figure from a fragment of some early railing might have originally formed part of a larger scene showing the dream of Queen Maya, mother of the Buddha-to-be. This is unlikely, however, for the shape of the fragment indicates that the figure was by itself in this corner, filling a space rather than belonging to a more elaborate scene. It is probable that on the other side of the curve made by this arch, another figure might have been introduced to balance this one. In any case, indications are that this young lady is grieving rather than just dozing off. Her entire stance suggests despair, fatigue of the mind.

Isolated representations of grief such as this are not common, but this figure makes the same kind of departure in subject matter as the fragment does in style. The sculptor shows us the entire figure in profile, in contrast with the marked frontality of earlier work, and plays with the curves of the body from this angle with a new kind of freedom. The large, stylized flower at the left belonged apparently to a decorative scheme, but its bloom and its freshness contrast with the bent and pained figure of the lady. She is apparently affluent, considering that her head is covered with an elaborate, bejewelled scarf, and the lower garment is held in place by a barely visible ornamented girdle. In keeping with the mode of the times, she is shown bare-breasted.

Literature

Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report, 1906–07, p. 94; O.C. Gangoly, "A New Page from Early Indian Art," *Rupam*, Calcutta, No. 19–20, July-Dec. 1924; *Inde: cinq mille ans d'art*, Paris, 1978, No. 12.

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102

THE HEROINE CONSOLED BY HER FRIEND
Gouache on paper
Pahari, last quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 142

It is not quite clear if this work belongs to a series. The figure might possibly be that of Damayanti, the heroine of the famous romance of *Nala Damayanti* which seems to have been a favorite with Pahari painters. But the dejected young lady seated on the raised wooden seat could be any *virahani nayika* seen at a moment when she loses control and nearly breaks down. The bent head, the hand raised as if to wipe a tear, the expression of sadness, and the whole stance, as if all hope had left her at this moment, strikingly suggest her state of mind.

The friend facing the grief-stricken woman, slightly older but talking in a wonderfully animated fashion, has a sympathetic expression and uses eloquent gestures of reassurance. She has evidently seen and heard a great deal and is offering words of solace. The painter does not bring much else into the work: the setting is relatively simple and uncomplicated; there are signs of affluence and rank, but no great point is being made through them. One significant detail is the flowering bushes in the background, just above the wall and visible far more fully through the window-opening in the back wall of the chamber. It is as if he wants us to know that while spring has arrived, the lover has not yet returned. This absence is the source of anguish and obviously the subject of conversation.

The workmanship is refined, the painter delighting in touches of delicacy: the pattern on the floor, the manner in which the scalloped edges of the ladies' skirts are treated, the double-sided heavy wrap worn by the friend and its extremely fine embroidery, the textured corner of the bolster against which the *nayika* rests. The painting does not immediately appear to express a state of mind with eloquence, but it slowly grows in stature when viewed intently and without haste.

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103

A YOGINI WITH A VINA
Gouache on paper
Deccan, last quarter of the 16th century; from a Bijapur workshop
15.3 x 9.8 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.404

When folk songs sing of women unrequited in love "taking *jog*" (turning to Yoga), they apparently refer to something like the situation seen in this painting. This lady may not be "disciplining herself in solitude for the sake of love," but certainly a longing does seem to inform her being as she wanders about through hill and dale, making sad music on the superb instrument that she carries. The *yogini* pictures like this one, seen often from the Deccan, have never really adequately been explained, and perhaps there is another dimension to them that eludes us; but almost always they fill one with a certain ache. That they represent unusual situations is certain, for it is not common for elegant and beautiful maidens to roam about alone singing, unless of course they happen to be personifications of musical modes in the established tradition of the *Ragamalas*. Nor are these *yoginis* necessarily "women of the imagination," casters of spells, who move around, as has sometimes been suggested. They are perhaps only what they appear to be: women in love, disconsolate in their passion and now detached from all snares, in a manner of speaking.

This superbly visualized and colored *yogini*, wearing a dress that one associates strongly with the Akbari court in the sixteenth century, comes from the Deccan where the style prevalent at the court of Ibrahim Adil Shah (1558–1627) of Bijapur, a great patron of the arts, possessed a "sumptuous grandeur linked to wistful magnificence," as Archer put it. This work with its jewel-like luminosity of colors is all the more affecting because of its really small size.

The beautiful, decorative margin of the painting contains verses written in *nastaliq*; these are in the hand of the celebrated calligrapher Abdullah "of the Fragrant Pen" who belonged to the court of the Emperor Jahangir.

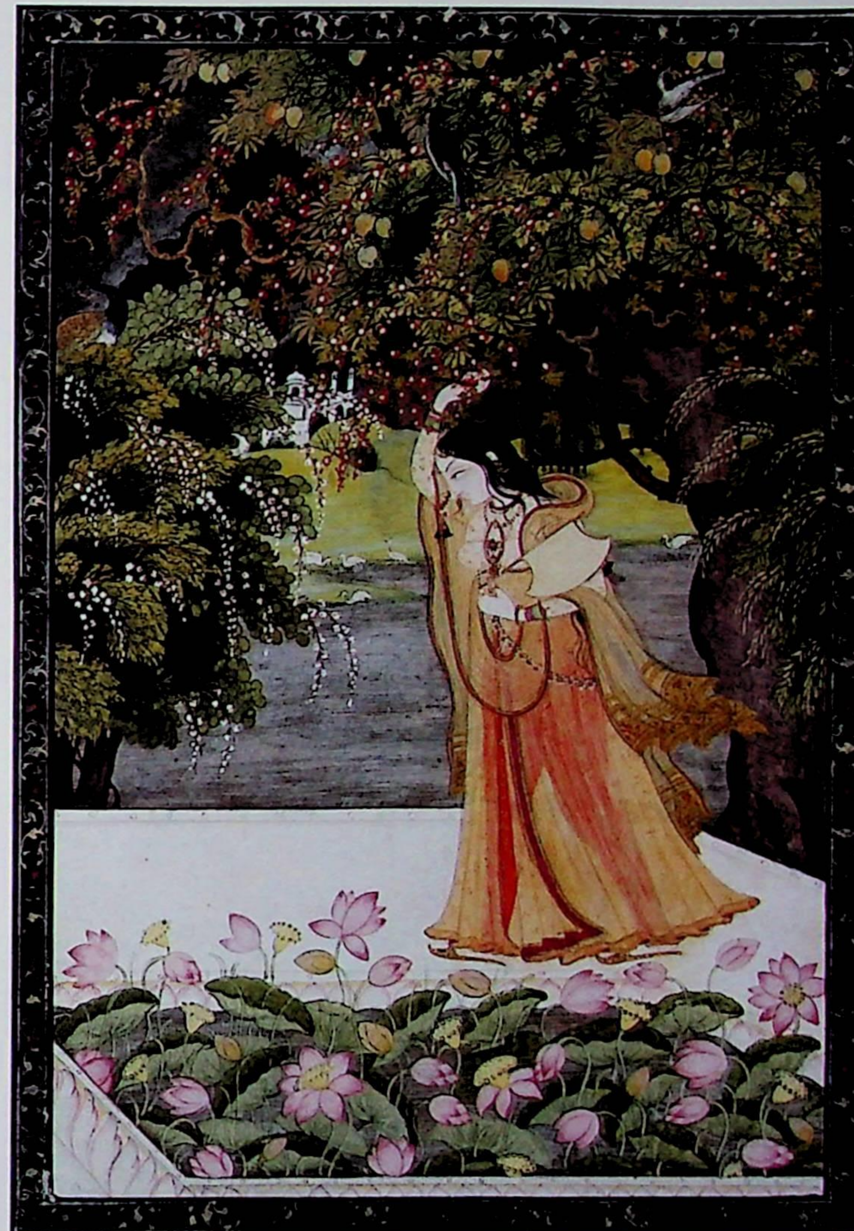
Literature

Mark Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting*, London, 1982; *In the Image of Man*, London, 1982, No. 162.

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104

THE DEJECTED HEROINE
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 375



The scene is carefully laid for a tryst. This young and attractive *nayika* stands in the secluded corner of a marble terrace edged by a small pool where lotuses blossom in profusion. The tree above the woman's head is laden with mangoes and flowering climbers twine in its branches, while other flowering creepers, appearing heavy with fragrance, are at the other edge of the grove. Cranes move about noiselessly in the middle distance. The town from which the woman has come to meet her lover is at a considerable distance, with only bits of roofs visible far in the background. The *nayika* has spent much care on her rich clothing and jewelry; the little bells on her girdles tinkling with the movement of the air in which her scarf flutters.

But it is clear that the mood has turned from anticipation to dejection. The lover is still absent. Longing turns to frustration, and all of it is expressed in the manner in which she now holds her body. The face is no longer lit with anticipation, the gaze has fallen away from the direction from which the lover would appear. The head and eyes are turned down, directed at nothing in particular. Subtly the painter communicates a sense of despondency, weariness, using nearly all the *vibhavas*, stimulants of emotion, that he would use for rendering love in union. It is only the *anubhavas*, the consequents, that are altered, in the form of gesture and posture. From these clues the viewer, aware in general of the situation of heroines in separation, fills the rest of the picture from his own imagination; thus the dejection of the *nayika* emerges as the dominant emotion in the work. But one must be extremely alert to little signs so as not to misread the painting. This is where the *rasika*'s role, his awareness and *utsaha*, become directly relevant to the work of art.

Some of the details in the painting, although rich, are handled routinely, for example, the foliage and birds. But some areas have remarkable freshness, such as the lotus pond where leaves, blossoms, buds, and fruit bend and sway, interlocking in wonderful arrangements. This little vignette is worked out by the painter with great feeling. Another little touch of delicacy appears in the slippers close to the woman's feet. Even though they are covered by the folds of the trailing skirt, one guesses at their daintiness from the extremely slim form of the slippers.

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105

OLD MAN SEATED IN SORROW
Terracotta
1st–2nd century; from Kaushambi, Uttar Pradesh
10 cm
Allahabad Museum, Allahabad, No. 2564

Great and ambitious works in terracotta apart, the tradition of producing small, highly expressive figures in this medium seems to have belonged to sites like Kaushambi and Sahet-Mahet. These works possess an air of intimacy, and one gets the feeling that the sculptor, working at this less elevated folk level, may often have translated his private thought into clay. Here we see an old bearded man seated, hands brought across the chest, head slightly tilted, furrows of worry prominent on his forehead and around the eyes. This is not the rendering of some honored sage, but an ordinary man in his failing years unable to cope with the burden of time.

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RAUDRA: THE FURIOUS SENTIMENT

रौद्ररस

VIRA: THE HEROIC SENTIMENT

वीररस

THE FURIOUS SENTIMENT arises from the enduring emotional state of anger (*krodha*). In his discussion of it, Bharata traces its origin to "*rakshasas*, *danavas* and haughty men," and states that "it is caused by fights." The determinants that give rise to it include "rape, abuse, insult, untrue allegations, exorcising, threatening, revengefulness, jealousy and the like"; its actions consist of "beating, breaking, crushing, fighting, drawing of blood and similar other deeds." The consequents through which *krodha* is expressed include "red eyes, knitting of eyebrows, defiance, biting of the lips, movement of the cheeks, pressing one hand with the other and the like." The complementary emotional states associated with the arousal of this sentiment, Bharata says, are "presence of mind, determination, energy, indignation, restlessness, fury, perspiration, trembling, horripilation, choking voice. . . ."

Bharata's mention of demonic characters such as *rakshasas* and *danavas* begs a question, and he replies to it himself, saying that "in the case of others, too, this sentiment may arise"; but, as far as the *rakshasas* are concerned, "it is to be understood as their special function. . . ." "They are naturally furious, for they have many arms, many mouths, standing and unkempt hairs of brown color, and prodigious physical frames of black complexion. Whatever they attempt, be it their speech, movement of limbs or any other efforts, is by nature furious."

Elaborating, Bharata classifies anger into five categories: "Anger caused by enemies, superior persons, lovers, servants and feigned anger." Each can be differently expressed, in the context of a theatrical performance. Thus, for example, while "one should show anger against control by the enemy with knitting of eyebrows, fierce look, bitten lips, hands clasping each other, and with threatening arms, shoulder and chest," anger against the beloved woman is to be expressed "by a very slight movement of the body, by shedding tears, and knitting eyebrows and with sidelong glances and throbbing lips."

Different from the furious sentiment, Vira, the heroic, arises from the enduring emotional state of energy (*utsaha*) and is conceived as relating to superior persons. The determinants spoken of in its context are "absence of sadness, power, patience, heroism. . . ." Its expression on the stage is, in addition, through consequents such as "steadiness, munificence, boldness . . . and the like." Other consequents mentioned are "firmness . . . charity, diplomacy." The complementary emotional states that go with the moods (*bhavas*) of energy are "contentment, judgement, pride, agitation, energy, determination of purpose, indignation, remembrance, horripilation. . . ."

Later writers speak of four different varieties of the heroic sentiment: the heroic of liberality, of duty, of war, and of benevolence. Vishwanatha, author of the *Sahitya Darpana*, gives elaborate examples of

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the different kinds of heroics in literary terms. Thus, for the heroic of benevolence, the address by Jimutavahana to a hungry vulture which has stopped eating him, is cited: "The blood is still circulated by the valves of my veins, and there is still flesh on my body—I do not see that you are yet satiated—why then, O bird, have you desisted from devouring?" The heroic of war is illustrated by the speech of Angada to Ravana, from the *Ramayana*. Asking the king of Lanka to come to his senses and return Sita, Angada issues a stern warning on Rama's behalf: "If you will not do thus, this arrow of mine—already stained with the neck-blood of your friends Khara, and Dushana, and Trisiras—once it makes friends with the bowstring that joins it, will forbear no further."

The distinction between the furious and the heroic is subtle and not always easy to grasp. The highly regarded Vishwanatha, in fact, sees much that is common between them, the essential excitant in both cases being an adversary, and the gestures expressing them being very similar. But this is open to argument. One major distinction is pointed out by Bharata himself, when he states that the heroic sentiment arises essentially from energy (*utsaha*) which belongs to superior persons, while anger belongs to many, and in particular to *rakshasas* and *danavas*. In sculpture and painting, as indeed in literature, one associates anger with sages and divine beings, of the fury of an incarnation of Vishnu (like Narasimha), or of an emanation of Shiva (like Sharabha). When the hordes of demons are dispatched by Rama, or Krishna angrily overpowers one demon after the other sent by Kama, clearly the dominant mood is anger. Seeing superb renderings of it in sculpture and painting, one is left in no doubt about the intention of the artist, or his understanding of a situation.

Vira, with its mood of energy, does not necessarily use an enemy or adversary as its taking-off point. While the gestures may sometimes be the same in Vira as they are in renderings of anger, energy is directed not necessarily against a given adversary or opponent, but informs the very person of a hero. One sees portraits of rulers, heroes going on hunting expeditions, or practicing archery, in which there is no mistaking the intention of the artist to depict the "firmness, patience, determination, heroism" of the character. Among the most moving renderings of energy are those assertive, monumental portraits in both sculpture and painting which emphasize, through stylization and attenuation of form, the might, the dignity, the air of authority that belong to a noble personage. The situation in such works does not lend itself to drama; there are no opponents or adversaries; no specific object of achievement is hinted at. And yet remarkable energy, leading to experiencing the heroic sentiment, is communicated with touching eloquence.

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106

THE GODDESS SUBDUES THE DEMON MAHISHASURA
Stone
11th century; from Karnataka
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 25241/6314



From narratives of the great conflict between the vast hordes of the demons and the great goddess Shakti, who represents the concentrated energy of the gods, the killing of the powerful buffalo-demon Mahishasura is a favorite of the Indian sculptor. It is as if this great and energetic deed sums up Shakti's essential nature. Mahishasura's death does not come as the climax of Shakti's valorous acts in battle; he is killed fairly early on, according to that great and spirited text, the *Devi Mahatmya* of the *Markandeya Purana*. But he seems to embody great and undisciplined power that stays beyond the pale of cosmic law.

The killing of Mahishasura takes many forms at different periods and in different regions of India. In early terracottas we see the goddess virtually crush him to death, pressing down on his spine with her bare hands. In other representations, the goddess presses him down with her leg while impaling him with her trident as she lifts his hindquarters by the tail. In yet other representations, we find the demon emerging in his human form from the neck of the buffalo, after its decapitation, while the severed head lies on the earth below. There are also representations in which the goddess is simply shown triumphant, standing on the demon's head or resting one raised leg on the recumbent body.

This superbly realized image is somewhat different, for Mahisha is conceived with the body of a human but the head of a buffalo. The goddess's trident pierces his chest while she also twists and turns back his massive neck. The drama is considerably heightened by this gesture, for Mahisha's head, now devoid of all arrogance and on the point of breaking from his body, tilted toward the viewer, is perfectly visible. His useless sword hangs limply in his right hand and as he dies, the goddess's lion lets out a great roar.

The focus of the image shifts from the dying demon to the powerful but still essentially feminine form of the goddess as her body sways, towering over the hapless Mahisha. Her ten arms fan out, holding weapons that have evidently come from the gods whose energy she symbolizes. Besides her own (or Shiva's) trident, she holds the discus and the conch shell of Vishnu, the sword and the shield that the texts say belong to her; one hand goes behind to pull an arrow from the quiver tied at her back. Significantly, her face does not betray great emotion but stays serene; a smile plays on her lips. It is as if killing a demon as powerful as Mahisha is all in her day's work.

There is emphasis on her womanly aspect, the perfectly formed firm breasts, the narrow waist, the fleshy thighs, but also great emphasis on ornamentation, from her tall, elaborately carved crown (*mukuta*) set off by a nimbus behind her head, down to her elegant and profuse jewelry, and even on that worn by the dying Mahisha. Her emblems—discus and conch shell—are held in the southern Indian convention seen in bronzes and stone figures, lightly perching atop two extended fingers, rather than grasped.

Literature

Indu Rakshit, "The Concept of Durga Mahishamardini and Its Iconographic Representations," *Roopalekha*, XLI:1–2, p. 62.

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107

THE GODDESS IN COMBAT WITH ASURAS
From a *Devi Mahatmya* series
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, dated 1703; from a Sirohi workshop
12.8 x 20.5 cm
State Museum, Lucknow, No. 65 135/2

Passionate energy informs some of the Rajput manuscripts, Rajasthani or Pahari, that treat the exploits of the goddess. This text is not unique in providing opportunities for showing spirited action, but there is a special air of conviction in most of these leaves. This may stem from the widely held belief in the efficacy of the *Devi Mahatmya* as a text, which is recited even today (as it was in days past) when uncommon dangers present themselves, or a specific wish is entertained by the devotee. Through faith in this text—its recitation and its visualization—they must have sought to propitiate Devi.

The present leaf picks out another episode from the goddess's many encounters with hordes of demons, as narrated in the text. As she sits self-assured on her leaping tiger (*vahana*) she hurls weapons at the enemy and also destroys those hurled at her. With two of her upper arms, she wields a massive-looking double edged sword or *khanda*; with the other two, she fingers another missile-throwing weapon that reminds one of the matchlocks featured in other paintings of this series. Facing her, the two equestrian figures look equally agile, especially the upper one who holds a sword between his teeth as he throws all his energy into the lance he wields with the right hand. These demons have human aspects, and are probably modeled after Muslim generals who fought the Rajput armies. On the ground, several warriors lie dead or dying, pierced by the instruments of death that rain in this gory field of battle.

This series was earlier believed to come from Sirohi in the south of Rajasthan, but a recently discovered leaf from this very manuscript bears a colophon Samvat 1760 (A.D. 1703) and the place of its execution as Balotra, not far from Jodhpur in the Marwar area. The manuscript is unfortunately now widely dispersed and many of its leaves are damaged.

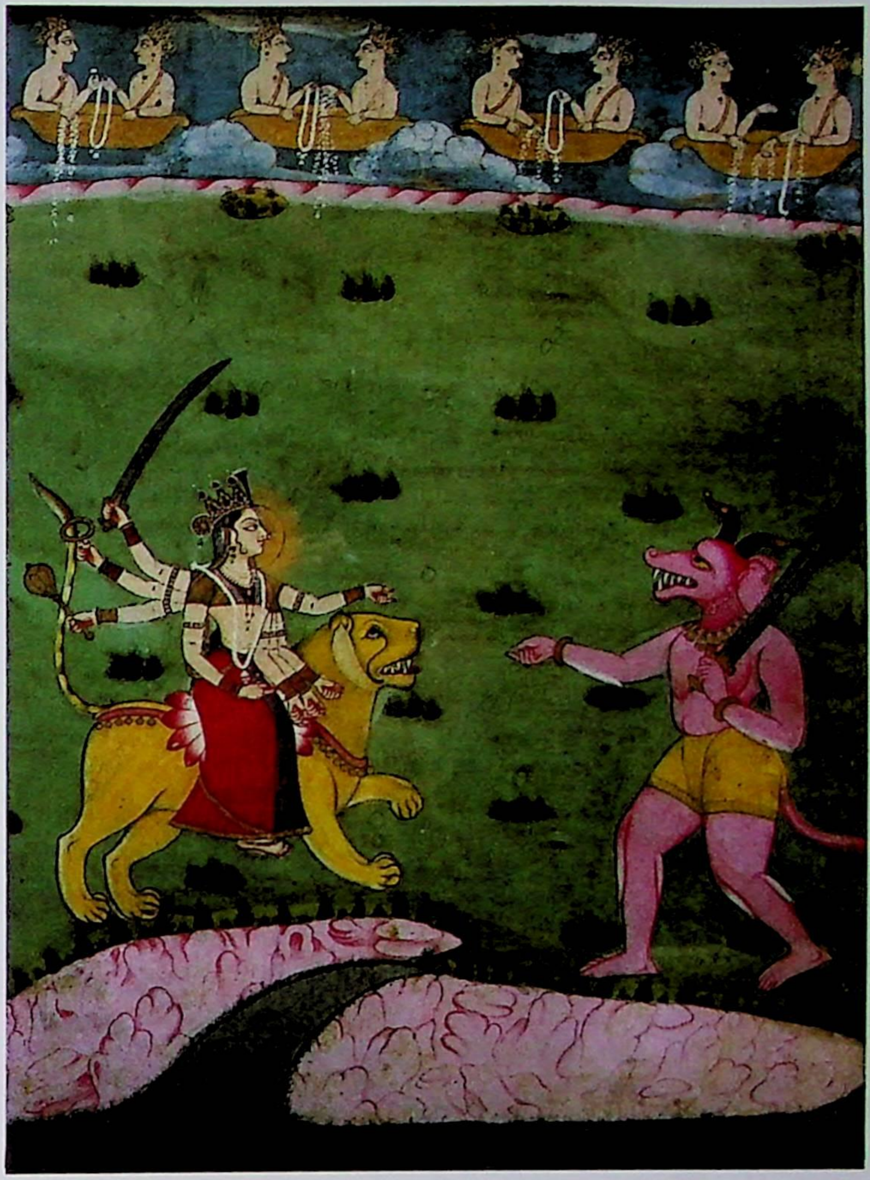
Literature

V.S. Agrawala, *Devi Mahatmya: The Glorification of the Great Goddess*, Varanasi, 1963; Pratapaditya Pal, *The Classical Tradition in Rajput Painting*, New York, 1978, No. 22.

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108

THE GODDESS ON THE BATTLEFIELD
From a *Durga Charitra* series
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Jodhpur workshop
48 x 128 cm
Umaid Bhavan Palace, Jodhpur, No. 1745



A great deal happens in this ambitious folio from an extensive *Devi Mahatmya* series, also known as the *Durga Charitra* (Exploits of the great Goddess Durga). In the titanic conflict that rages between the gods and the demons, the goddess lets loose her great energies upon her adversaries. To her assistance come the *shaktis* or "female energies" of the foremost of the gods themselves, each riding a *vahana* belonging to her consort; thus, Vaishnavi, Maheshwari, Brahmi, Kaumari, Indrani, Yami, and Narasimhi. She has also given rise to the dark-bodied Kali, devourer of Time, annihilator of all that comes her way. Riding her magnificent lion-mount the goddess herself encounters one demon after another, listens to their extravagant claims, smiles at their amorous propositions. All of this is packed into this page and laid out very clearly for the viewer to see. It is when one focuses on little details that the intention of the painter comes across clearly. He is drawing our attention to her manifold aspects: her beauty as she sits on her powerful *vahana,* armed to the teeth, holding weapons of great destruction in her eight arms; her great energy as she advances menacingly at the head of the *shaktis* towards a threatening demon; her dark powers, as she bites off the heads and bodies of those lying dead on the battlefield, crunching them between her massive teeth. Her great resplendent glory summons forth the very gods in their heavens as they descend in their airborne vehicles, carrying flower garlands in homage.

The coloring has the usual brilliance of Jodhpur work and marks this entire series which consists of as many as fifty-six leaves, most of which are now divided between the Mehrangarh Fort Museum and the personal collection of the Maharaja of Jodhpur, now in the Umaid Bhavan Palace. This *Durga Charitra* series is not dated, but a publication of the Museum bearing the date 1924 refers to it as "approximately 100 years old," in a fair assessment of its period.

Literature

Vishweshwar Nath Reu, *Introduction to the Durga Charitra Series in the Sardar Museum*, Jodhpur, 1924.

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109

LIONS FIGHTING
Tinted drawing on paper
Mughal, 2nd half of the 17th century
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 561/733

Indian painting contains magnificent and well-known studies of fighting camels and elephants, but not many works treat the subject seen here. Two lions, perhaps claiming the same territory or the affections of the same lioness, are locked in deadly combat. The one at the right seems to be getting the better of the duel, even if one of his forelegs is caught in the jaws of the other lion. At this moment, his teeth are set firmly in the neck of his rival, who is squirming and supine, belly and genitals exposed. It is a jumble of bodies: we see tails flailing, muscles tensed, eyes flashing, claws extended and taut. We can even hear the roar of the noble beasts if we strain hard enough.

This drawing of uncommon vigor shows the animals from entirely unconventional viewpoints: where else does one see a lion on his back, or the underside of his chin and mouth? The work seems to be by a Mughal master working in the second half of the seventeenth century. Some doubt could perhaps be raised about its origins and date, for the character of the outlines and the absence of fineness in details such as the manes at first seem "un-Mughal." But these features seem to stem from the artist having decided to adapt his line to suit the subject and thus make bold departures. It is because of these changes that the work vibrates with a strange, nervous energy. Note that the purple streaks representing blood and streaming out seem to be later additions.

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110

THE GODDESS DURGA SUBDUES THE DEMON MAHISHASURA
Sandstone
5th century; from Bhumara, Satna District, Madhya Pradesh
55 x 74 cm
Allahabad Museum, Allahabad, No. 152 (BS)

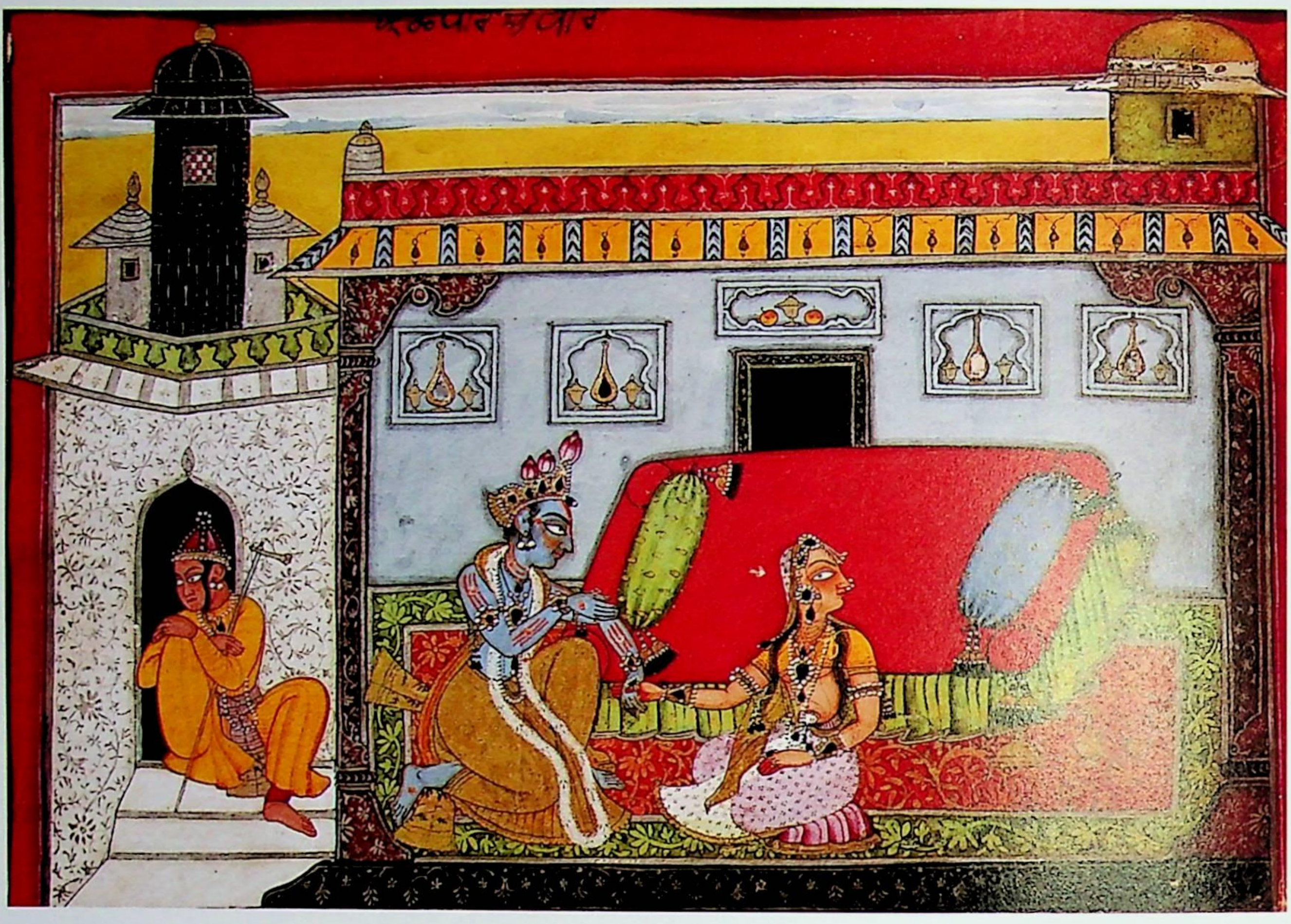
The heroism of the warrior-goddess Durga is once more evident as she stands triumphant over the demon Mahishasura, whom she has just subdued and killed in battle. As the savior of the gods, who were about to be overpowered by an array of demons, she takes on the enemy in engagement after engagement, as narrated in the *Devi Mahatmya* (also called the *Durga Saptashati*), the text *par excellence* for the devotees of the goddess even to this day. Mahishasura is deceitful, valorous, and powerful beyond compare, but no match for the goddess. When she finally subdues him after fearful battle, the gods break into songs of praise. This is probably the exact moment that the sculptor of this refined and energetic relief celebrates. Four-armed, the goddess sets one foot contemptuously on the head of the vanquished demon, lifts his hindquarters by the tail, and pins him down with her trident. While she looks unmoved, as if killing a demon as powerful as Mahishasura were not the most demanding of feats, to the gods this saving act comes as a great relief. The glory of the goddess is established briefly here by an attendant, a short male who looks much like a *gana* of Shiva's, the suggestion being perhaps that he is here because she is none other than the great god's consort. The coiled locks of the attendant figure, as also those of the goddess, are elaborately treated, in the style of the day.

The scene is set in a circular medallion that forms a part of an arched ornamental motif (*chandrashala*) that continued the form of the early *chaitya* window into Gupta times. This *chandrashala* with its beautifully articulated relief comes from the temple of Bhumara, which has yielded such fine sculpture.

Literature

R.D. Banerji, *The Temple of Siva at Bhumara; Memoir of the Archeological Survey of India*, No. 16, Calcutta, 1924; Pramod Chandra, *Stone Sculptures in the Allahabad Museum*, Varanasi, 1970, No. 130.

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III

"WITH BITTERNESS IN HER GLANCE"
From the same *Rasamanjari* series as No. 39
On verso, Sanskrit verses; on front, *praudha dhiradhira* (the mature heroine who combines patience with bitterness) in Takri characters on top
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
24 x 33 cm
Dogra Art Gallery, Jammu, No. 367

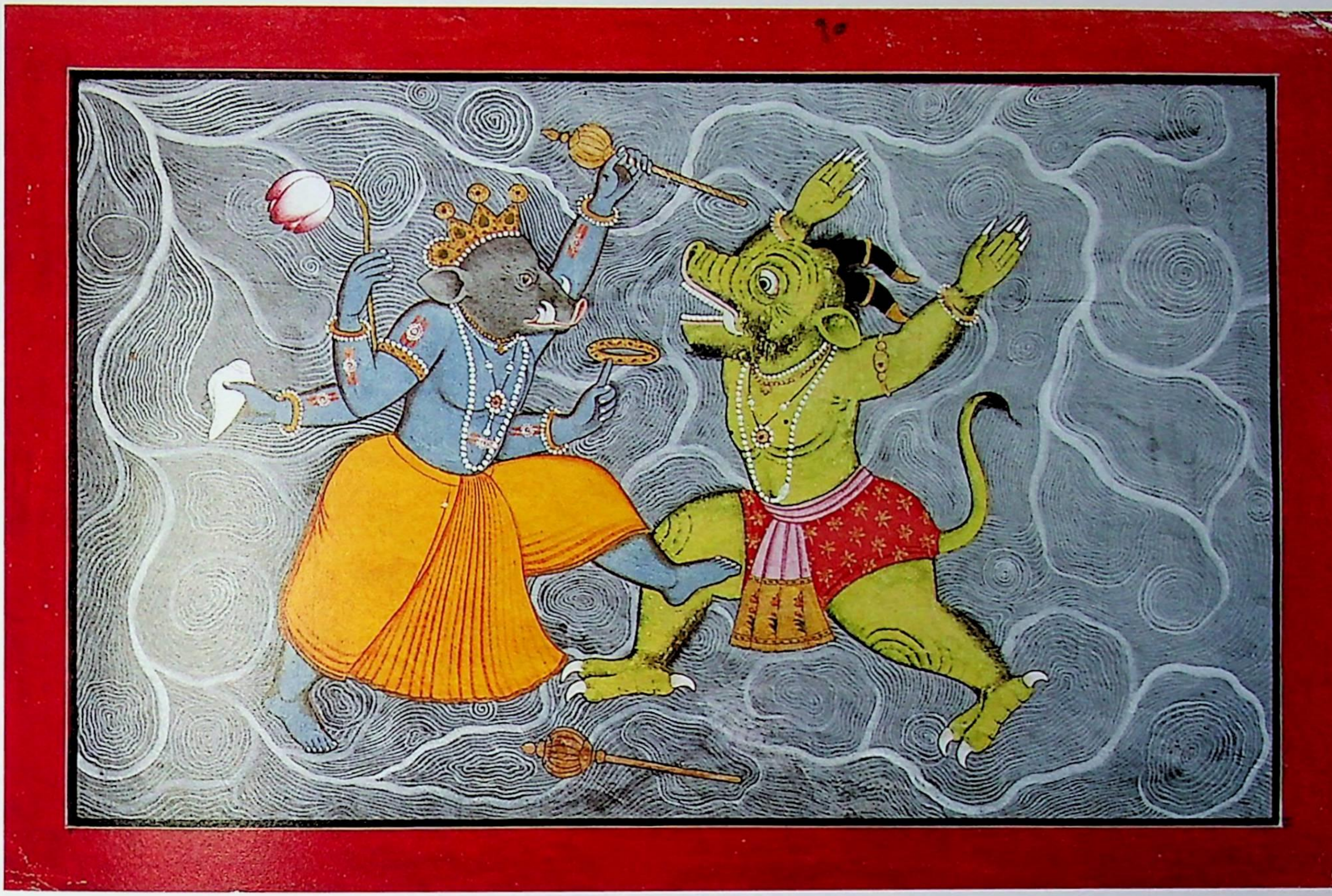
To the lover's or *nayika's* fault, different kinds of heroines, *nayikas*, respond differently: the young and uninitiated frequently has little control over her reactions in speech and gesture; the moderately experienced heroine reacts with a certain care; but the mature heroine, who combines patience with the capacity to lash out bitterly, reacts as she does here. The lover, assailed by feelings of guilt—the guilt clearly of having been faithless to her or not having kept his part of a bargain of trust—goes to face his beloved with trepidation and, for this reason, takes a friend along for moral support. But he has to face his beloved alone. Her anger is apparent immediately, for she has got off the bed and is sitting on the floor, all eagerness having left her. He makes overt gestures without speaking:

> As the lover drew near her bed, the doe-eyed *nayika* turned her face away. When she heard him imploring in a heavy and tremulous voice, she smiled a little and her cheeks became flushed. But when he laid his hand upon hers, she, with wide-staring eyes, threw him a glance which had all the radiance of rays reflecting off the back of a fish dipped in molten lac.
>
> (17)

The setting is bereft of the usual garlands and brightly burning lamps associated with impending union. The withdrawn, slightly timid companion sits on the steps outside, not sure of the outcome of the enterprise. The conciliatory gestures and the ingratiating look in the lover's eyes lead one to hope, but the *nayika's* look demolishes everything. This quaint, unusual rendering of her large eye with the pupil moving toward the corner seeks to interpret the extremely beautiful descriptions of the poet's—that "fish dipped in molten lac" which sends out rays of great brilliance. The comparison comes from standard descriptions of beautiful heroines with elongated fish-shaped eyes, and the "molten lac" refers to the redness that comes into them from rage. One notices the half-barred door in the back wall; this is precisely what the *nayika's* own mind is like, only half-open to the lover's entreaties.

Literature
See No. 39.

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112

VARAHA, THE BOAR-INCARNATION OF VISHNU, BATTLES THE DEMON HIRANYAKSHA
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
On verso, descriptive text and Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
27.8 x 31.5 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. E–125

When the *Bhagavata Purana* is termed a seminal text for Rajput painting, whether of the Rajasthan or the Pahari area, it is generally with reference to the story of Krishna, which is certainly central to the *Purana* but figures only in Books Ten and Eleven of that extensive work. One hardly thinks of the earlier books of the *Purana* in the context of painting, for although packed with magnificent myths, they are rarely depicted by painters. From the Pahari region, however, comes a most remarkable series of paintings (called the "small" Guler-Basohli *Bhagavata Purana* by Archer, *infra,* and Aijazuddin), remarkable not only for its high quality but also for its sheer numbers. A large group of folios dealing with Books Three and Four of the *Purana* have turned up. It would seem that the project was left unfinished, because leaves in the same hand but dealing with later books have survived only in the form of highly accomplished drawings.

Being a Vaishnava text *par excellence*, the stories of Vishnu and his many incarnations are told with passion and eloquence in the *Purana*. In Book Three is a detailed account of the third incarnation of Vishnu in his form of the great boar. The occasion for this manifestation of Vishnu was the dominance attained by the golden-eyed demon Hiranyaksha who had mastered the earth and taken it with him into the womb of the waters. Pledged to saving the earth whenever it was endangered, and to uphold cosmic, moral order (*dharma*), Vishnu decided to take on Hiranyaksha. He assumed the form of a boar and entered the waters, smelling with his great snout to find where the earth had been hidden away. Then, with Hiranyaksha in pursuit, Vishnu lifted the earth on his tusks to her safety. Having done this he next assumed a composite form, a human body with a boar's head, and challenged Hiranyaksha.

This episode, told with great verve in several chapters of Book Three of the *Purana*, seems to have fired the imagination of the Pahari painter of this series, for close to fifteen paintings of this battle in different stages are known to have survived. The painter's

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setting, the eddying waters which fill the entire surface of each painting, does not change; only the protagonists keep changing stances and tactics. Here, for instance, greatly enraged by the arrogant words of the demon, Vishnu as Varaha (the man-boar) advances, kicking him on the thigh, as Hiranyaksha's mace falls from his hands. The challenge in the demon's eyes is still strong as he rallies with a roar but Vishnu, magnificently rendered in his blue-grey body clad in his favorite yellow *dhoti*, and bearing his familiar emblems (conch shell, lotus, mace, discus) remains unruffled. This struggle of Titans goes on for an inordinate length of time, and the painter seems to enjoy rendering every moment of it.

In the history of Pahari painting, this series figures in a significant phase in the development of the style of the Guler family of Pandit Seu and his two sons Manaku and Nainsukh. It comes *after* the famous *Gita Govinda* dated 1730, in the hand of Manaku, but *before* the large *Bhagavata Purana* in which the story of Krishna is told. Thus it can be dated roughly to 1740. W.G. Archer and Aijazuddin, however, place the set in Basohli and date it ca. 1765. Several leaves from this series have been included in the present exhibition. Even though its quality is uneven and some pages are bland, at its best, as here, it possesses a certain grandeur.

Literature

Milo C. Beach, "A *Bhagavata Purana* from the Punjab Hills," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, LXIII:333, 1965, pp. 169–177; B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg*, XXI:4, September, 1968; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Basohli; F.S. Aijazuddin, *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, London, 1977, *s.v.* Basohli.

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113

VYALA: AN IMAGINARY BEAST
Khondalite stone
13th century; from Konarak, Orissa
163 x 82 x 59 cm
Archaeological Museum, Konarak, No. 854



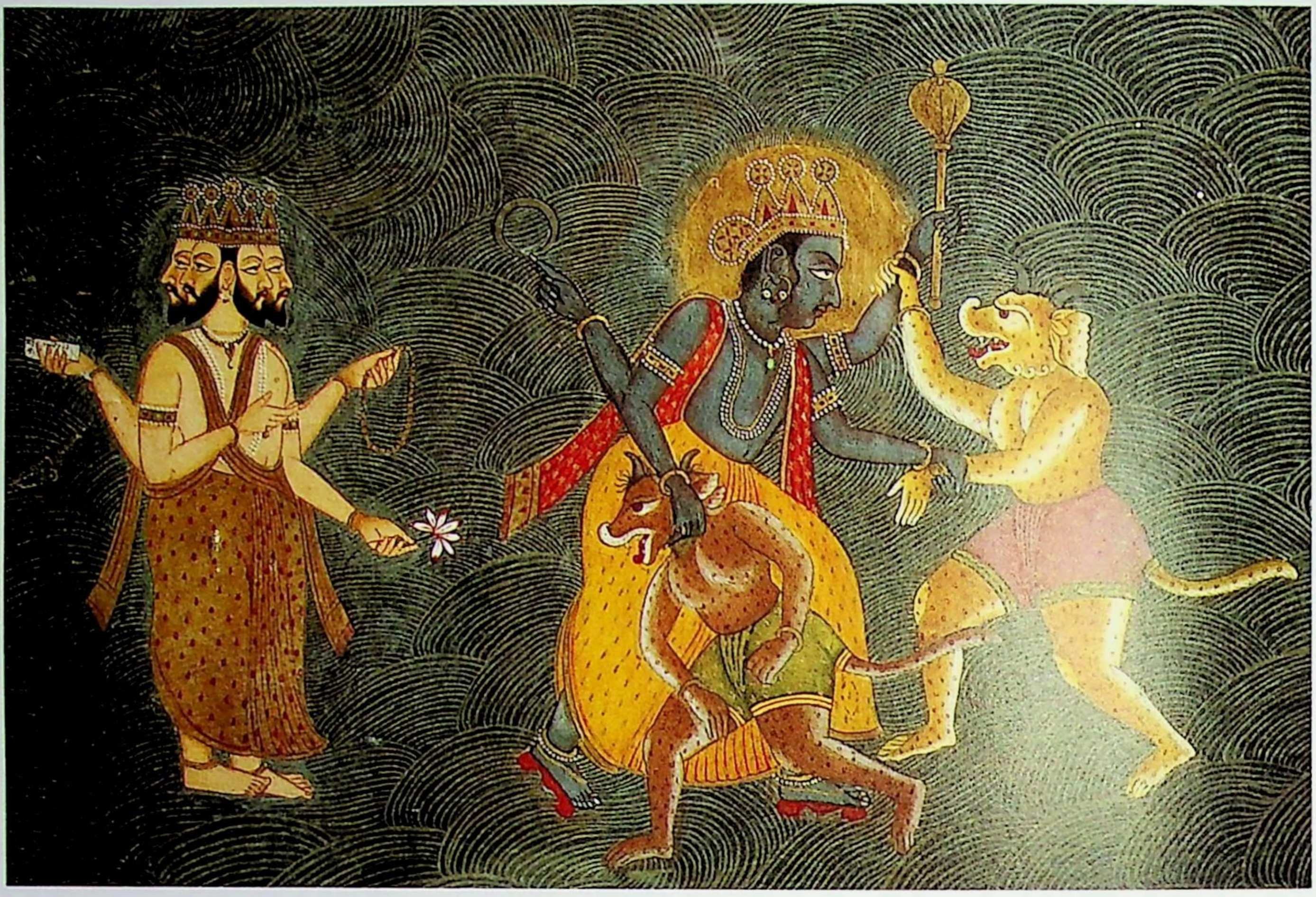
Of the remarkable menagerie of composite animals that the Indian sculptor commanded, the *vyala* or *shardula* makes the greatest impression when seen on medieval temples. Occupying recesses in the walls, the *vyalas* throw into relief the alluring beauty of *surasundaris*, beautiful women of the gods, who adorn countless temples, drawing attention to themselves. But the manner in which the two coexist, those beauties and these beasts, is remarkable; between them they do make a strange kind of harmony. Conceived as parts of the grand plan of a temple as it soars upward, the *vyalas* are shown as rampant leonines, more tigers than lions, further accentuating the power of the structure and its verticality. They are always there, energetic and angry by turns. As an adjective, the word *vyala* means wicked or vicious; in this sense they could also be seen as forms that ultimately ward off the evil eye from auspicious buildings. But the interest in them is more than their symbolic or functional meaning. They stand out as finely realized forms, complete in themselves.

This *vyala*, as he turns back with an angry snarl, as if reacting to a poke in the ribs, has received the same amount of attention from the sculptor as the celestial maidens on the sun temple at Konarak. The ornamental manner in which the mane has been treated, those ringlets and curlicues and cloudlike formations of hair, the delight with which the nostrils flare or the angry bulge of the eyeballs, those rows of sharp uneven fangs, have all been worked with enormous care and precision. That this is no ordinary beast one sees from the manner in which the parts of the form are all brought together, as much as from the fine jewelry that adorns its body. One can imagine how those bells round the neck and the hindquarters, strung on silvery chains, must tinkle and make a noise as the *vyala* turns back with a jerk of his massive head.

Literature

In the Image of Man, London, 1982, No. 33; Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.*, Washington D.C., 1985, No. 73.

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114

VISHNU KILLS MADHU AND KAITABHA
From the same *Durga Charitra* series as No. 108
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Jodhpur workshop
48 x 128 cm
Umaid Bhavan Palace, Jodhpur, No. RJS/JR-1702

In a surprise move, the author of the *Devi Mahatmya* from the *Markandeya Purana*, the eloquent text that glorifies the powers of the great goddess, introduces in its first chapter an exploit of Vishnu. As Vishnu sleeps his eternal "inward-turned" sleep on the endless waters, Brahma, who sits on the cosmic lotus that emerges from Vishnu's deep navel, is suddenly threatened by two demons, Madhu and Kaitabha, "born of the impurity of Vishnu's ears." Unable to face two demons and finding Vishnu in deep slumber, possessed of Yoganidra (the goddess in her form as yogic slumber), Brahma begs her to leave Vishnu's body so that he can awake to meet this sudden challenge. Appeased by Brahma's homage and entreaties, Yoganidra obliges, and Vishnu wakens to find the demons striking threatening postures against Brahma. Greatly enraged, Vishnu takes them on, but the demons possess remarkable powers and engage Vishnu in "a battle that lasts five thousand years." Then suddenly, their judgement is clouded by the grace of the goddess. Turning to Vishnu they tell him of their satisfaction with his valor and ask if he would like to make a wish. Seizing the opportunity, Vishnu expresses the wish that they should die at his hands. Thus entrapped, the two demons yield themselves, and Vishnu, gripping their necks and arms, bends them across his knees and slays them with his great discus.

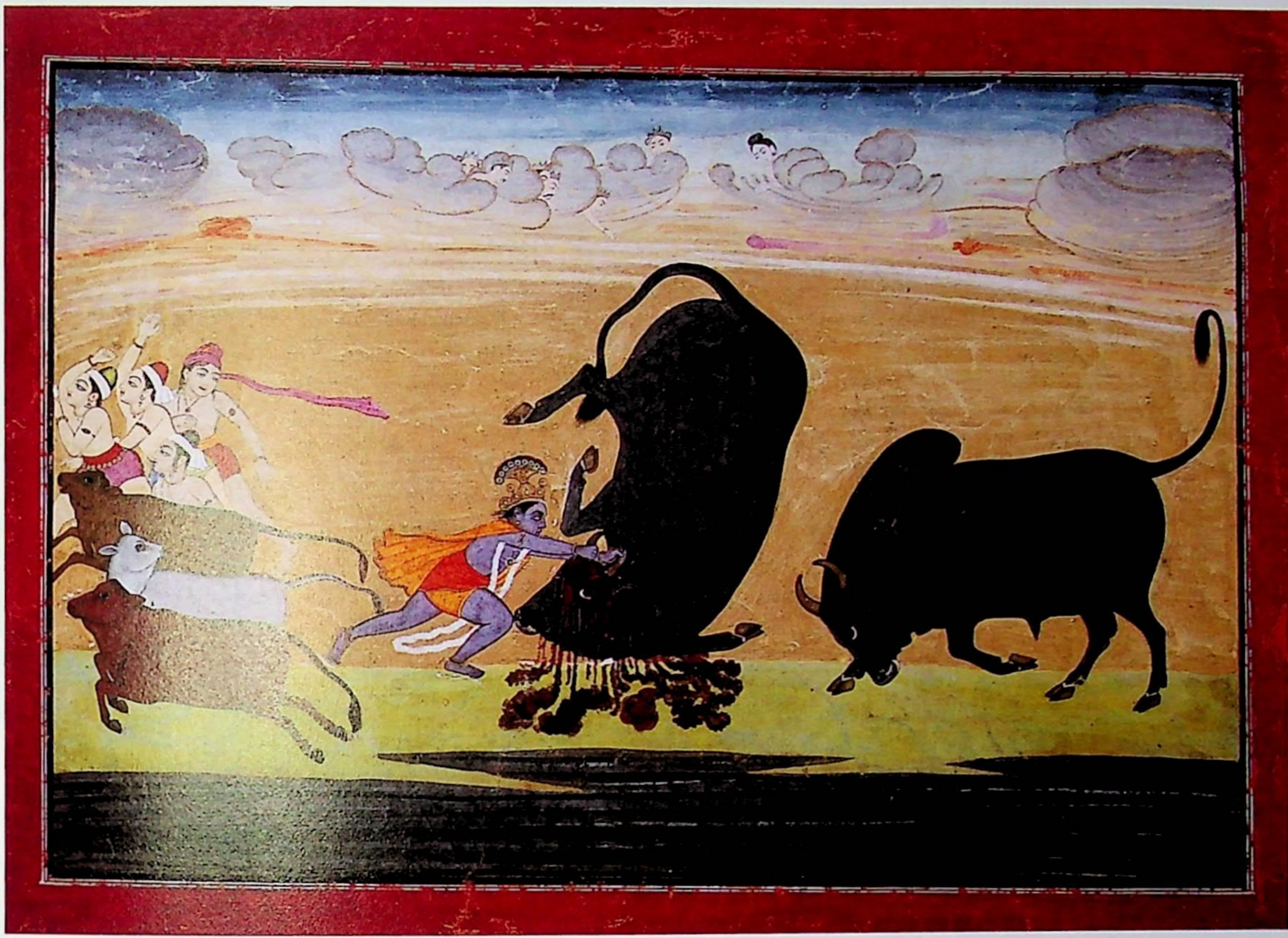
Describing the killing of Madhu and Kaitabha, the author of the *Purana* prepares us for what will follow in this authoritative Shakta text. But for the moment, the focus is on Vishnu whom we see here blue-bodied and four-armed as he energetically bends forward, seizing the two demons while Brahma, placid and peaceful, looks on.

The painter renders the expanse of the waters superbly, using the familiar stylized basket-weave pattern with great flair. The coloring is vivid and bright; set against the dark and gold background of the expanse of water, the scene appears as if in wonderful, clear relief. The use of gold in this leaf is judicious and effective, avoiding the excess that belongs to so much Jodhpur work of this period.

Literature

Vishweshwa Nath Reu, *Introduction to the Durga Charitra Series in the Sarda Museum*, Jodhpur, 1924.

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115

THE KILLING OF ARISHTASURA, THE BULL DEMON
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
On verso, descriptive label in Sanskrit
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No.388

In this scene, the demon Arishtasura, in the guise of a powerful, black bull, charges at Krishna and his companions with their herd of cows. We see the demon twice, once when he enters from the right pawing the earth arrogantly and, his tail shooting up, advancing with his neck lowered; then again we see him in the middle, subdued and humbled by Krishna. Krishna's companions take fright, "the cow and calves with their tails stiffened," the boys raising a shout and almost losing their turbans. Krishna alone turns back and advancing, seizes the bull by the horns and throws him up in the air while twisting his massive neck "like a housewife wringing water out of wet clothes." The controlled fury in Krishna's eyes, his fluttering scarf and swaying garland of flowers, the limp tail of Arishtasura and the piteous look in his eyes as he gives up the ghost, the stream of blood which flows to the earth, the gods gathering in the heavens to witness Krishna's heroics, all demand close attention.

This leaf comes from a fairly extensive group of paintings, designated by W.G. Archer as a "fifth" *Bhagavata Purana* series from Basohli, and dated by him to 1760–65. While there is room for much argument in this, one wishes only to note here that the series is regarded as being related to the dated *Gita Govinda* of 1730 that bears the name of the artist Manaku, son of Seu, and is seen as a late development under Guler influence. Archer and Binney also suggested at one point that the principal artist of the series may have been Fattu, Manaku's son and thus Nainsukh's nephew.

The series is somewhat uneven in quality, but at its best, as in a leaf such as this, it attains remarkable vigor; in other leaves it can also attain a very lyrical quality.

Literature

Milo C. Beach, "*A Bhagavata Purana* from the Punjab Hills," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston,* LXIII:333, 1965; B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg*, XXI:4, September, 1968; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Basohli.

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116

KRISHNA KILLS THE HORSE DEMON KESHI
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
On top border, descriptive label in Takri
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
20.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1270

As Krishna started growing in his village home, doted upon by his foster parents and all the inhabitants of Gokula, news of his existence traveled to his uncle Kamsa, the evil king of Mathura. Feeling constantly threatened as long as his nephew lived, for a prophecy had already said that his death would come at Krishna's hands, Kamsa devised many nefarious plans to have him killed, including sending one powerful demon after another. But nothing availed for Krishna was divine, the very incarnation of Vishnu, who saw and understood all.

The episodes of Krishna and his elder brother Balarama killing a host of these demons are told with much relish in the pages of the *Bhagavata Purana*. On one occasion, Kamsa sent Keshi, a demon in the form of a horse of extraordinary strength, to attack Krishna. Massive as a mountain, we are told, he came charging full tilt at Krishna, hooves pounding the earth and "ruffled mane displacing the very clouds in the sky." But Krishna was undaunted and stood his ground "like a rock," smiling his gentle smile. He suddenly thrust his left arm into the wide-open mouth of the horse, as fearlessly and naturally as a serpent finds its way into its own hole. The tender lotus hand became like a heated iron rod. At its mere touch, Keshi's teeth fell out one by one. Then Krishna's arm began to swell and expand inside the demon's mouth. It reached such proportions that the horse was unable to breathe. In the twinkling of an eye he began to kick his feet, his body was covered with perspiration, his pupils turned and he began to excrete dung. Then his massive body fell to the ground with a great thud and he died.

In this leaf, which pulsates with energy and interprets the wrath of Krishna when challenged, the painter produces one of the finest paintings of this great series. With characteristic economy, he isolates the two antagonists from the village crowd and sets them starkly against a hot yellow ground. The figure of Krishna, charged with vitality, seems to be borne on air, in contrast to the horse whose hooves firmly touch the ground. There is no doubting the strength of the horse, but also no doubting the outcome of the struggle. Such is the conviction behind the work that it appears for a moment as if the spectacle had been actually witnessed by the painter.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting*, New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot; B.N. Goswamy, *The Bhagavata Paintings from Mankot*, New Delhi, 1978; Ibid., et al., *Krishna the Divine Lover*, Lausanne, 1982; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna*, West Franklin, 1980.

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117

KRISHNA AND BALARAMA KILL KAMSA, THE EVIL KING
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
On top border, in Takri: descriptive label
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
21.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1282

In an episode in which the early part of Krishna's earthly career culminates, we see him killing Kamsa. For years things have been moving toward this end, the *Bhagavata Purana* narrates in its impassioned yet stately manner. All Kamsa's attempts to kill Krishna having failed, he finally invites Krishna and Balarama to his presence in Mathura, where a great festival is to be held. After some minor incidents the two brothers arrive at Kamsa's court only to find one threat after another; but they overcome them all. Before they kill the two giant wrestlers Mushtaka and Chanura, who challenge them, they dispose of the mountainlike elephant Kuvalayapida, who is let loose upon them. It is the tusks of that very elephant, still pink-red with his blood, that the two brothers are wielding as they reach the innermost part of the heavily guarded arena where Kamsa sits enthroned.

The painter shows Krishna and Balarama arriving in the court, flushed with anger, determined finally to uproot the evil that is Kamsa. Balarama, ordinarily the more excitable of the two, falls a step behind Krishna, for it is the destiny of Kamsa to die at the hand of Krishna. Defenseless, Kamsa falls, but in one last piteous gesture, he touches Krishna's feet, for surely that is where salvation lies. The minor characters reflect different moods: the seated man with his turban falling registers agony and despair, while the two attendants show resignation, perhaps even secret satisfaction.

There is high drama in this scene, enough to match the animated text of the *Purana* at this point. In a blaze of saffron yellows, reds, greens, oranges, and blues, the painter captures the essence of the episode. In other works from the Pahari tradition, the killing of Kamsa is set in an enormous courtyard with countless courtiers looking on as Krishna unseats Kamsa; but for all the ambitiousness of their compositions, they do not come close to the compacted energy in this leaf.

Literature
See No. 116.

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118

THE FIGHT BETWEEN JATAYU, THE VULTURE KING, AND RAVANA
From a *Ramayana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 11098

This episode from the *Ramayana* is much loved for the feeling of devotion (*bhakti*) that it contains. When Ravana, the powerful demon king of Lanka, abducts Rama's wife Sita and is proceeding with her to his island home, Jatayu, the great vulture and a devotee of Rama, hears her lamentations and decides to intercept Ravana. This courageous act is doomed, for Jatayu is no match for Ravana, whose enormous power is symbolized by his ten heads and twenty arms. Fierce is their struggle all the same, Jatayu throwing everything into it. Driven by rage, he pounces upon Ravana, and clawing and pecking, succeeds in relieving his adversary of many of his weapons. Eventually he is overpowered and dies at Ravana's hand, but not before he has a chance to meet his adored Rama, and tell him of the direction which Ravana had taken Sita. That sets off another chain of events culminating in the attack on Lanka.

The battle, as envisioned here, is fierce and sanguine: Jatayu flies at Ravana, trying to sink his massive claws into his frame and gouge out his eyes with his powerful beak. Seeing his courage, this act of desperate valor, Sita is wonder-struck and Ravana's fury mounts. Already he has pierced Jatayu's body with a spear, and now he proceeds to hack his mighty wings away with the axe he wields as one of his myriad weapons.

The painting belongs to a large series (more than 270 leaves) popularly referred to as the "Shangri" *Ramayana*, with reference to the small place in Kulu; from its ruler many leaves were acquired. W.G. Archer splits the Shangri leaves into four styles, and in his classification, the present leaf would fall into his style IV.

Literature

For the Shangri *Ramayana* in general, see Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958; M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting*, New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Kulu.

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119

RAMA DESTROYS THE DEMONS' ARMIES
From a *Ramayana* series
On verso, descriptive text and Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
22 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. E–103

The *Ramayana*, the great Sanskrit epic of early India, has made a deep impression on the Indian mind. It is the story of Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, who is held up as the ideal king to whom *maryada*, which means restraint, balance, and appropriate conduct, mattered more than anything else. As an upholder of *dharma*, moral order, he stands for the highest of values even when maintaining them might mean loss of a whole kingdom. Rama's trials, as he enters a fourteen-year exile to honor a pledge given thoughtlessly by his father, take up the greater part of the *Ramayana*: a life of great privation, the abduction of his ever-devoted wife, Sita, many combats with demons (*asuras*), and finally the great battle with Ravana, the mighty lord of Lanka who had deceitfully taken Rama's consort to his island kingdom. But throughout all this, Rama, gentle as always and firm in his resolve, never wavers from his course.

Peerless on the field of battle, Rama never flinches from his duty to destroy evil, for that is the very purpose of his incarnation. When he is set upon by a group of demonic sympathizers of Ravana, as here, Rama is relentless. He takes whole hordes of demons single-handed, demolishing them with arrows. In this brilliant page, peopled with dead and dying demons (*rakshasas*), one sees something of his fury. As his arrows pierce the advancing hordes, "rivers of blood" flow; the demons hit the earth, their horns, snouts, fangs, and hairy limbs all askew. Their convulsing mass at the left, the superb, rich coloring of the page, and the close study of moments of agony and death mark this and many other leaves of this series.

Stylistically this *Ramayana* set is related to and represents a stage earlier than the celebrated *Gita Govinda* of 1730, which has a colophon with the name of the artist Manaku and which is generally placed in Basohli. Manaku, however, was the elder brother of Nainsukh of Guler, and this set represents the style of the Seu-Manaku-Nainsukh family in the early years of the eighteenth century, before it received the impact of Mughal work. Not many leaves of this series have survived. As well as a group in the Chandigarh Museum, there are others in the Central Museum, Lahore. A handsome group recently discovered and acquired is in the Reitberg Museum, Zurich. W.G. Archer places the series in Nurpur.

Literature

B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg* XXI:4, September, 1968; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Nurpur; B.N. Goswamy, "Leaves from an early Pahari Ramayana series," *Artibus Asiae*, XLIII, ½, 1981–82; F.S. Aijazuddin, *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, London, 1977, *s.v.* Nurpur Nos. 2(i) to (xv).

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120

HANUMAN FIGHTING THE ENEMY
Terracotta
5th century; from Shravasti, Uttar Pradesh
31 x 40 cm
State Museum, Lucknow, No. 287

The energy of Hanuman, the monkey-chief who plays such a crucial role in the later portions of the *Ramayana*, is legendary. The prodigies of valor that he performs, the crossing of the ocean, the burning of Lanka, the bringing of the life-saving herb to revive Lakshmana, are the subject of hymns of great praise. He is also the most eminent among Rama's devotees, utterly dedicated and going into an ecstatic state at Rama's mere mention. To Hanuman is dedicated the celebrated forty-verse hymn by the saint-poet Tulsidasa, the *Hanumana Chalisa*, still recited daily by millions of men.

But here we see Hanuman in his aspect of fury and valor as he leaps into the air to strike his adversary. Within the limited format of a brick tile of the kind employed so well by Gupta sculptors and builders, an attempt is made to convey the essence of Hanuman's energies. Recognizing his monkey face, his curled locks, and his short drawers is not problematic; only his opponent remains anonymous. But from the sculptor's point of view, Hanuman's enemy is not important. It is enough to establish the fact of his subduing a demon, embodiment of evil.

Hanuman's opponent here is shown with a normal human face; the only indication of his evil nature is his sharply curved and angry eyebrows. These are the simple means with which the Gupta maker of terracottas often worked. And yet he was able to pack these little tiles with great expressive power, paying attention to significant details such as a flying scarf, a bend in the body, the arch of an eyebrow.

Terracotta tiles of this kind, produced at the village level, were found in large numbers during the excavations at Saheth Maheth, ancient Shravasti. As Vogel pointed out, many of them were marked with numerical figures indicating the position which they occupied in a frieze.

Literature

J.P. Vogel, "Excavations at Saheth Maheth," *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*, 1906–08, pl. XVII.

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121

NARASIMHA: VISHNU IN HIS MAN-LION INCARNATION
From a *Dasavatara* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
16.5 x 23.5 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.217

In this dazzling painting, we see the climactic point in the *Bhagavata Purana* episode of Vishnu's fourth incarnation (in the series of ten *dasavataras*), Narasimha, the man-lion. This manifestation of Vishnu was occasioned by the need to end the tyranny of the demon-king Hiranyakashipu, whose power had grown to oppressive proportions and who would not allow anyone, not even his own son Prahlada, a great devotee, to pay homage to Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu's overweening arrogance stemmed from the boon he had deceitfully received earlier from the gods—he could not be killed either by man or animal, on the earth or in the water, in daytime or by night. When the moment came to put an end to Hiranyakashipu's devastations, Vishnu took this unusual form of man-lion (neither man nor animal), appeared at the hour of twilight (neither day nor night) and, bursting forth from a pillar in the oppressor's palace, took him on his own knees (neither earth nor water), and tore his belly open with his bare claws.

The wrath of Narasimha is the subject of this work, and it appears not only in the blood spurting from the demon-king's belly, but even more in the ruffled golden mane of the lion, his oblique bloodshot eyes, the tongue hissing like a snake, the mouth like a fiery furnace. The massive eight-armed figure, holding the emblems of Vishnu in its various hands, is not content with just rending the demon-king: Narasimha garlands himself with his fallen adversary's entrails. This miraculous, awesome apparition, however, receives humble worship from Prahlada and, to the right, his equally devoted sister.

Superbly colored and tautly composed, this work stays very close to the same vision the painters of this workshop from Mankot commanded when they produced the great *Bhagavata* series now in the Chandigarh Museum.

Literature

Douglas Barrett and Basil Gray, *Painting of India*, Ascona, 1963, frontispiece; for related material, W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hill*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot.

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122

NARASIMHA: THE MAN-LION INCARNATION
Sandstone
10th century; from Uttar Pradesh
State Museum, Lucknow, No. H–125

In his relentless ongoing struggle against the powers of darkness, Vishnu the great preserver descends to earth in cycle after cycle of time, restoring balance, upholding *dharma*, the law of righteousness, and cosmic order. When all power is held by the great demon-king Hiranyakashipu, whose defiance of all morality stems from his confidence in his own immortality and whose oppression extends even to his own son, Prahlada, a devotee of Vishnu, the god decides to incarnate himself. Knowing that Hiranyakashipu had received a boon from the gods that he could not be killed by either man or animal, by night or day, neither on earth nor in water, he decides to take the unusual composite form of the man-lion Narasimha and bursts forth in the hour of twilight from a pillar in the demon's palace. As the demon-king sees this awesome vision, all energy leaves him, his sword hangs limp in his hands, and his knees weaken with fear. Picking him up, Narasimha puts him over his knee (neither earth nor air), and tears him apart with bare claws. The devotees breath once again with ease; *dharma* triumphs.

The accounts of this incarnation of Vishnu, his fourth in the sequence of ten, are spirited as they go into the details of this fearsome aspect (*raudra rupa*) of the ordinarily serene god. His eyes blazing red, his golden mane spreading out with anger and "nudging the very clouds in the sky," his voice loud and rumbling like thunder, his claws sharp as daggers, Narasimha is the embodiment of fury. In this work, we see him perform his promised deed of putting an end to evil, as worshippers and devotees bend in obeisance and Hiranyakashipu first falls under Narasimha's raised leg and is then ripped apart. Subsidiary figures and decorative rampant lions are all around, but the focus clearly remains on the god, his eyes (in a departure from the usual formula) not elongated but wide and angry "like spiraling conch shells," while the two upper arms pull his locks toward the sides in a gesture reminiscent of Durga the warrior-goddess as she combats demons. The relief does not attain the grandeur or energy of some of the monumental depictions of Narasimha, but it does communicate a measure of the fire and energy that belong to the narratives.

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123

SHIVA AS THE DESTROYER OF DEMONS
Sandstone
10th century; from Gyaraspur, Madhya Pradesh
210 cm
State Archaeological Museum, Gwalior, No. 178



Among the host of evil forces that Shiva destroys is Gajasura, the elephant who is none other than the demon Nila, "the dark," who assumes this form for killing Shiva. Like others before him, he not only fails, but is killed by Shiva. In the contest against Gajasura, Shiva is so incensed and his rage reaches such proportion that after killing the demon he flays him, and holding the skin above his head, dances frenetically. Shiva's dance of rage and destruction is rendered in majestic images in early India, and even when the Gajasur-killing images went somewhat out of fashion in later time, the skin of the elephant tended to stay with the god, serving as his loincloth or as a mat on which he sometimes sits with his family.

Sometimes the image of Shiva killing Gajasura is combined with his aspects of killing Andhaka and of taking on his terrible Bhairava form. In all three aspects, Shiva's whole being is suffused with wrath. In the images where he kills Andhakasura, the demon is seen impaled at the end of a spear Shiva holds aloft with two hands and, following the myth, the dread goddess Yogeshwari is shown close to Shiva's feet, lapping up the blood that falls from Andhaka's body.

This wonderfully energetic, vibrant work suggests the coming together of these three aspects of Shiva. As he lifts his left leg in *alidha* posture, placing it on the head of a subdued demon, we see behind his massive head the head and the trunk of an elephant, clearly the flayed Gajasura. The long sword is held in a manner suggesting that of holding the spear on which Andhakasura dies, although damage to the stele makes it difficult to be certain. But the haggard, emaciated woman at bottom right is evidently there to lick the dying Andhaka's blood. The terrifying roar that Shiva lets out with his wide-open mouth, the long garlands of bones that he wears, and his dread aspect in general, are suggestive of his Bhairava form. The demon dying under Shiva's left foot is perhaps Nila.

There is great power in this massive medieval image. The head, slightly disproportionate to the rest of the body, follows a convention frequently employed in this period, and possibly had something to do with the placing of images. As we see the image now, more or less at eye level, this disproportion looks far more prominent than if the figure had originally been placed higher. Considerations of this kind were very much a part of a sculptor's conception of images and of the whole scheme of embellishment in the context of a temple.

Literature

Published in M.B. Garde, *A Guide to the Archaeological Museum at Gwalior*, XV(a), Gwalior, 1928; S.R. Thakor, *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum at Gwalior*, Gwalior, n.d.

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124

CHASHTANA, THE KUSHANA SATRAP
Red sandstone
2nd century; from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
155 x 61 x 35 cm
Government Museum, Mathura, No. 12.212

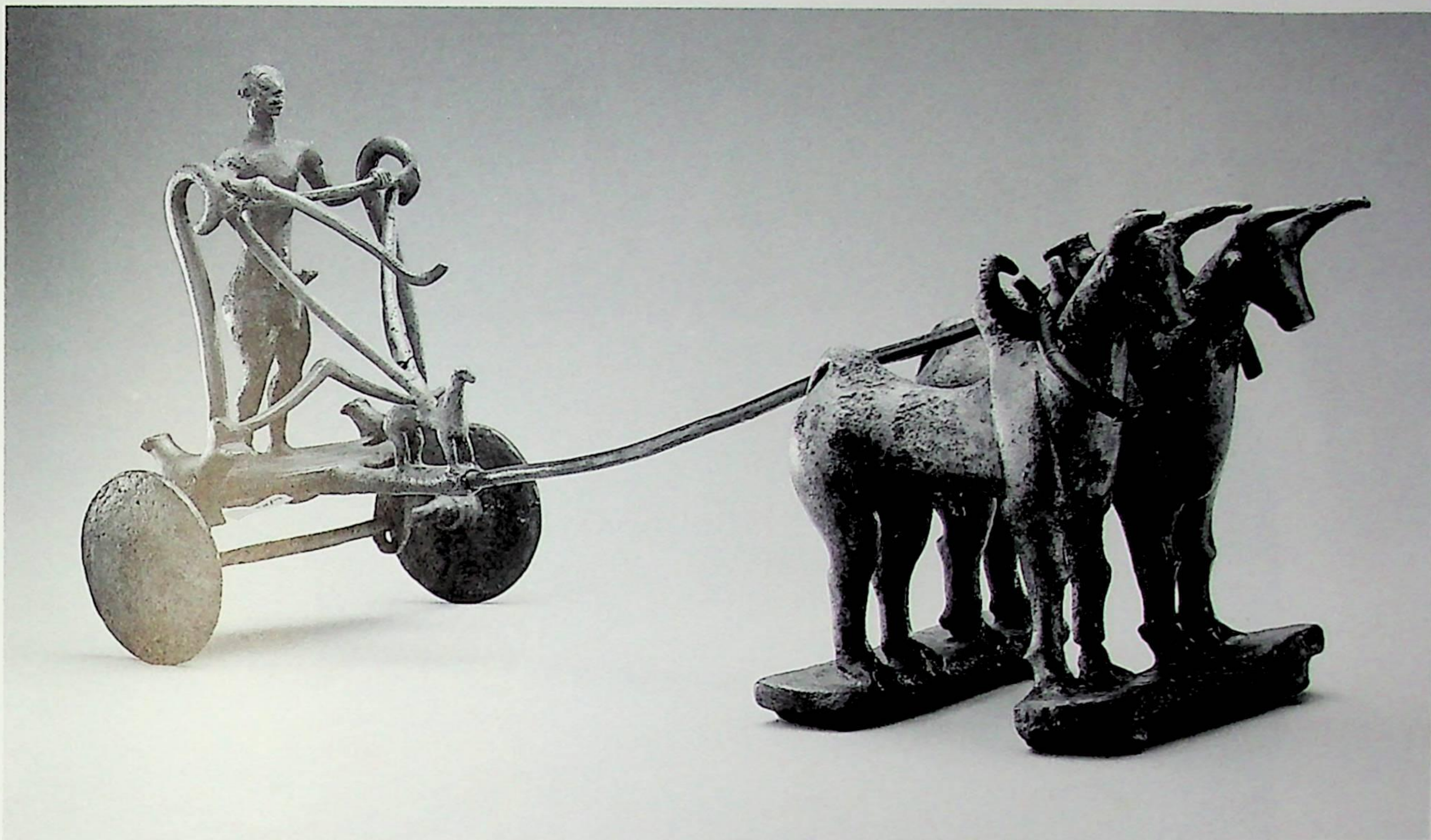
This celebrated but somewhat controversial figure comes from a group that evidently belonged to an ancestral gallery (*devakula*) of the great Kushanas. Much of the controversy centers around the identification of the figure, rendered difficult by the mutilation of the inscription close to the hem of the tunic. A widely held view is that the inscription identifies the figure as Chashtana, a great Saka satrap of Ujjayini, even though it reads slightly differently, and no titles in the inscription help. Caution must be exercised in accepting this identification with the powerful governor who ruled in the second century A.D. Rosenfield, who examined the evidence in some detail, retains the label of this figure as a "statue of Chashtana," but advises that the identification is tenuous.

Reminiscent in some manner of the great portrait statue of Kanishka, but commanding less authority, this work of early portraiture, now headless, still remains remarkably impressive as a work of art and as a kind of political statement. The sheer scale and weight of the figure are hard to ignore. It has some superb details, such as the embroidery on the hem and collar of the long tunic, the magnificently carved belt with figures of horsemen and tritons, the sword belt slung across the body. These impart a feeling of careful, precise workmanship, even as the figure makes its presence felt in a different fashion. The tunic is unusual, with a diagonal overlap along the front.

Literature

John Rosenfield, *The Dynastic Arts of the Kushanas*, Berkeley, 1967, pp. 145–147, fig. 3; *In the Image of Man*, London, 1982, No. 115; *Ancient Sculptures of India*, Tokyo, 1985, No. 180.

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125

CHARIOTEER
Bronze
2000–1500 B.C.; from Daimabad, Maharashtra
22 x 52 x 17.5 cm
Archeological Survey of India, New Delhi, No. 74.77/4
(on loan to the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay)

A chariot, even though it ceased long ago to be a part of India's life, continues to loom in the Indian imagination, for with it is associated a certain majesty, a sense of power. While the gods have their divine vehicles (*vahanas*) in the form of animals or birds, the heroes of myth and epic appear resplendent in chariots. The literary descriptions are superb—the *Mahabharata* describes impending battles when two armies are ranged in opposition, and the fiery chariot steeds of Arjuna or Bhishma and a thousand others paw the ground with impatient hooves.

This unusual bronze from Daimabad is not from the period to which these literary descriptions belong. It is much earlier, and does not possess the extravagant detail of legend, but it brings off a heroic air, despite its simplicity. The standing charioteer, naked but for a loincloth, carrying a long and hooked sticklike weapon resting lightly on the sculptured dog standing on the chariot, is commanding, and the animals, although stylized and heavy, seem to be informed by the same energy their master possesses.

This bronze is not just another of those engaging toys that the Harappan culture is so rich in: it seems somehow to have had a solemn ritual significance. The sculptor has placed a considerable distance between the animals yoked in front and the body of the chariot itself, thus incorporating a great deal of space in the piece, which takes on, curiously, a wiry, energetic air.

There is some uncertainty about the date for even though this piece was unearthed about ten years ago (along with some other bronzes from the site of Daimabad in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, which has yielded pottery of the late Harappan phase), it did not come out of a scientifically controlled excavation but was found by a group of local people. To this uneasy circumstance is added the fact that the arsenic content of the alloy present in this piece is not shared by other chalcolithic sites in the Deccan region. All the same, it is accepted by several scholars as a late Harappan artifact on other grounds, including those of style.

Literature

S.R. Rao, "Bronzes from the Indus Valley," *Illustrated London News*, March, 1978; M.K. Dhavalikar, "Daimabad Bronzes in Harappan Civilization," in *Harappan Civilization*, ed. Gregory Possehl, New Delhi, 1982; Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India*, Washington D.C., 1985, No.3.

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126

AN ATLANTID FIGURE
Grey schist
3rd century; from the Gandhara region
35 cm
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. A 32240/5240

The differences in approach to the Mathura sculptor's rendering of the human figure and that of his Gandhara counterpart is illustrated easily, for the Gandhara sculptor shows much greater interest in the externals of the form. A naturalistic intent informs his entire work, and realistic renderings of the muscular structure of the body, as distinct from Mathura sculpture of the same period. He cannot shake off his Greco-Roman legacy, even when he treats of purely Indian types like the Buddha and *bodhisattvas*. In rendering an Atlantid figure, which owes to western models, he does not even feel the need to adjust his style, for then the subject and its treatment coalesce completely, and the work of the Gandharan artist moves away from whatever Indian-ness it otherwise possesses.

This figure, which must have formed a part of the total decorative scheme around a *stupa* or some other architectural monument, clearly emphasizes the form's physique and the latent energy. Broad shoulders, a broad muscular chest, firm and narrow waist, a large head with shapely features, massive-looking arms and legs is what the sculptor works with. The manner of sitting—one leg folded underneath and the other knee raised, with weight on the right arm pressing down on it, are also characteristically non-Indian. The beard style and the curly hair strongly suggest an extra-Indian origin. Possibly Indian in feeling is the relatively quiet, inward-drawn expression of the face. But the emphasis, as is appropriate in an Atlantid figure, is on the sheer power of the body.

There is a certain roughness to the carving, quite different from the smooth surface which Gandhara sculptures generally possess. But this in itself imparts to the figure an air of rough-hewn strength.

Literature
See No. 95.

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127

THE GREAT GODDESS ENTHRONED
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 4th quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
17 x 20 cm
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 1970 (R)

This manifestation (*rupa*) of the goddess can be described as *rajasik*, of middle order: neither pure and unblemished, nor tinged by the dark powers of destruction she is capable of wielding. She is seen here in the role of a sovereign who exercises with great majesty her sway over mankind. She sits on a superbly crafted raised throne with an unusually high back which gives a clue to her regal status; the royal umbrella with a bent stem held over her head by a female attendant adds to the glory of the goddess. As a representative of all who are under her command, another female figure, four-armed like the attendant behind her, stands in obeisance before the throne. The two figures carry emblems of destroying power—a long sword, a trident held aloft, reflecting the verticality of the throne—but their aspect is softened by the lotus buds they also hold, offering homage. The goddess, wearing a five-pointed crown topped by lotus buds, and seated in gracious ease, holds in two of her hands a bow and an arrow, indicative once again of her royal status. A long garland of fragrant flowers around her neck dangles in front and over the base of the throne.

What gives sudden animation to the scene is the presence of two tigers at the foot of the throne, their slim waists curving under it and their heads raised high in anticipation of action. Their appearance, somewhat natural because the tiger is the mount of the goddess, adds further meaning to the term *simhasana* (tiger-seat) that describes the throne. A dainty row of slender-stemmed flowers occupies the bottom of the picture. The entire scene is set in brilliant glowing colors against a dark background, with only a narrow strip of clouds occupying the very top of the painted surface.

This aspect of the goddess, reminiscent of her Bhuvaneshwari or Tripura-Sundari forms, is meant to be seen as being charged with latent power rather than power exercised. In many ways the painting recalls another superb work in the Archer Collection, which shows the goddess in her resplendent form being driven in a chariot to which tigers are harnessed.

Literature

W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973; *s.v.* Basohli.

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128

SHIVA THE ARCHER
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 239/690

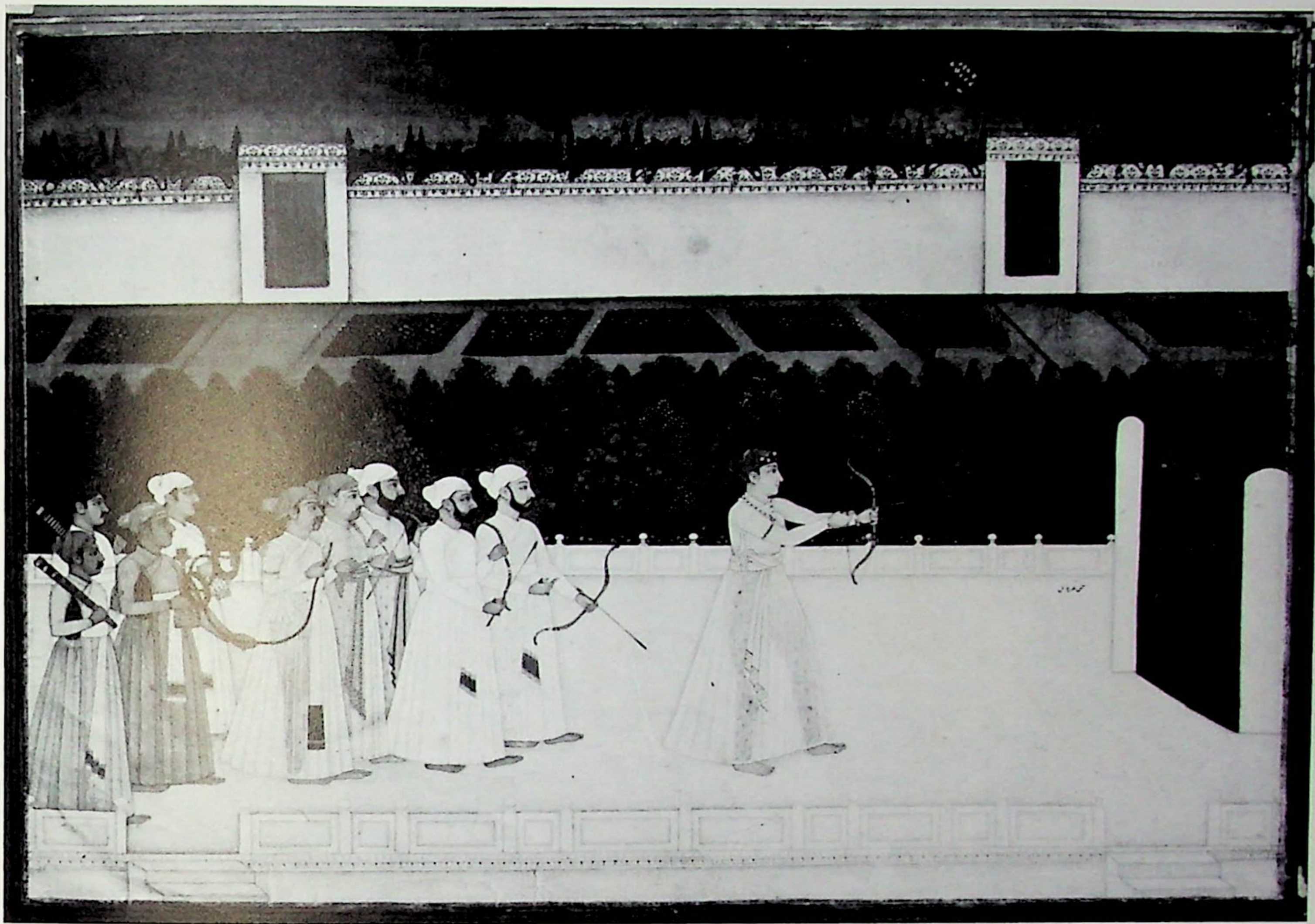
Shiva the *yogi* is also Shiva the great warrior, destroyer of the three cities and vanquisher of hosts of demons. Besides his other weapons—the axe, the trident (*trishula*)—he wields the mighty *pinaka* bow that strikes terror in the hearts of his enemies. This bow is associated with his name, Pinaka-pani; it is this bow that he holds in his great Tripurantaka images in stone and bronze. In an unusual representation, we see Shiva seated on his noble mount Nandi, resting his weight on his feet rather than on his back as he would if he were sitting astride. He holds the bow in his extended right hand; the left arm is aloft, as if just having released an arrow. A quiver of arrows rests between his thigh and stomach. The god's appearance is unusually simple: two-armed, a leopard skin loosely draped over his shoulder, and a *dhoti* on the lower limbs. There is virtually no jewelry on the body, his matted hair is tied in a bun, and clearly discernible are his third eye and the crescent moon on the forehead. The expression on the face is one of total composure, even softness, as if destroying the enemy is a duty he discharges lightly, both in body and mind. Contrasted with his composure is the animated gallop of Nandi the bull, as if he were aware of the need for swiftness on the battlefield. The painter seems to say that we know the unseen enemy too well. In any case, he aims at making a clear, uncluttered impression, with Shiva on his mount sharply set against a flat, reddish background.

This painting, when published in *Rupam*, No. 9, accompanied an article on *ragas* and *raginis* but bore no caption. If the intention was to suggest that it represented in some manner a *raga* like Bhairava, the suggestion would carry little conviction, for Bhairava has quite a different iconography, even allowing for its considerable variations.

Literature

Kannoomal, "Notes on Raginis," *Rupam*, No. 9, 1922, pp. 91–99; also see Stella Kramrisch, "Siva, the Archer," in *Indologen Tagung*, Wiesbaden, 1973, pp. 140–150.

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129

A RULER PRACTICES WITH BOW AND ARROW
Gouache on paper
Late Mughal, 1st quarter of the 18th century
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 340/286

In traditional texts, when the virtues of a ruler are listed or the routine of a day in his life is described, a certain amount of attention goes to skills of marksmanship, in which he is expected to excel. We often get represention of rulers, real or legendary, in the act of practicing archery within the surroundings of their palaces. When a day in the life of Nala, the hero of the story of Nala Damayanti in the *Mahabharata*, is described in the *Naishadhacharita*, we find him practicing archery in one of those five Pahari drawings now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Here, at one end of a large marble terrace is a solid wooden board with markings (at right); in the middle stands the unidentified ruler, bow in extended left hand. His companions and retainers form a group a short distance behind him. One of the men in this group also holds drawn an arrow, and evidently waits his turn at the target. But all eyes naturally are on the ruler whose skills the group of men behind him is all set to emulate.

The workmanship is controlled and delicate, and great effort has been lavished on tiny details, as in the rendering of the mass of trees in the middle distance, or the geometrical parterres of flowers far at the back. The same kind of attention to detail is seen in the rendering of the garments, their weight or transparency carefully established. The effect overall does not directly evoke the work's intent to point out the heroic quality of the ruler, who must also have been the painter's patron. Imagination is needed to complete the picture of the prowess of the chief seen in action here.

The work, with its emphasis on precision of details, seems to be by the hand of one of those late Mughal painters, such as Nidhamal, who shifted out of the center of power at Delhi and took up employment in one of the rising "provinces," such as Oudh or Murshidabad, where new and affluent patrons were eager to engage them.

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130

KING NARASIMHADEVA AS AN ARCHER
Black chlorite
13th century; from Konarak, Orissa
85 x 50 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 50.186

Personal prowess is among the myriad qualities an ideal king was meant to possess in early India, insofar as the texts define them. Among the things a king does as part of his daily routine is to practice archery. This seems to have been a standard way of making a statement about the physical culture; that a great king emphasized his skill in marksmanship placed him a cut above others of his time.

Knowing this background, and wishing to leave a record of that great builder and devotee of Orissa, King Narasimhadeva of the Eastern Ganga dynasty, it was natural for sculptors to depict the excellent marksmanship of the king. One celebrated relief shows him as a great devotee paying homage to Jagannath, the presiding deity of Orissa, and to other gods; sculptors also rendered him taking his ease on a swing in the company of ladies of his palace household. Taken together, and coming from the same workshop, these reliefs and these three themes are clearly related. They represent an image of the king as a great devotee, a benevolent householder, and a great warrior.

Here, there is almost a touch of divinity about the figure of Narasimhadeva, his legs spread, his body slightly bent forward, and his arms in the gesture of mocking an arrow. In front is an enormous wooden plank, held at an angle, at which the king has already shot a whole sheaf of arrows with such power that their points emerge at the back. Lesser figures surround the king, some seen as if paying homage to the gods with hands folded and held above their heads, others paying homage to this god on earth, Narasimhadeva. The bearded, short man at the left may be the ruler's *guru*. Above the elaborately carved pavilion which tops the scene are flying *vidyadhara* figures at either end, adding further to the notion of divinity associated with the king; the register at bottom shows soldiers armed to the teeth with swords, shields, and bows and arrows. At the extreme left is a horse topped by a royal parasol, suggestive of the all-subduing *ashvamedha* sacrifice that the king was entitled to by virtue of his great conquests.

This carving shows remarkable skills, especially in the figure of the king, which conveys great verve and energy. Lesser figures have received less attention, but the composition is arranged with a very sure eye so that one is led to the central figure of the king from all directions.

Literature

C. Sivaramamurti, *L'Art en Inde*, Paris, 1974, No. 572; *In the Image of Man*, London, 1982, No. 120; Eberhard Fischer, Dinanath Pathy *et al., Orissa: Kunst and Kultur in Nordost Indien*, Zurich, 1980; A. Eschmann, Hermann Kulke *et al., The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Tradition of Orissa*, New Delhi, 1978, figs. 37–40.

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131

KRISHNA KILLS THE ELEPHANT KUVALAYAPIDA
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
20.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1299

At the entrance to the arena where Kamsa was himself seated, the *Bhagavata Purana* says, he had placed his great elephant, Kuvalayapida, massive as a mountain and fearsome as Kala the god of death. When Krishna and Balarama moved up to enter the arena, the driver (*mahout*) of the elephant brought Kuvalayapida to block their way. Angrily Krishna asked the *mahout* to move the elephant; instead the *mahout* used his goad on Kuvalayapida to enrage him against the two boys. Seeing no way out, Krishna advanced, determined "to teach both the *mahout* and the elephant a lesson." He rushed at the elephant and gave him a hard blow. Trumpeting furiously, the elephant charged. Krishna adopted a different tactic—hiding between his legs, feigning a fall on the ground. When the elephant was thoroughly aroused, Krishna began playing with him. Creeping up behind him, Krishna dragged the elephant by his tail. Thus he made light of the awesome power of Kuvalayapida; when the elephant was tired and frustrated, Krishna "toppled him with one full blow," and the animal collapsed on its back, *mahout* and all. Then Krishna jumped on his back and with a powerful heave pulled out the two tusks which he and Balarama then wielded as weapons to kill Kamsa's soldiers and eventually Kamsa himself.

We see here Krishna triumphant, having just brought the battle to a finish. His and Balarama's heroic stance as they prepare to move forward toward Kamsa's arena contrasts with the piteous state of the profusely bleeding elephant and the helpless *mahout* and attendant. The composition is deftly handled. The tumult of the struggle is caught in the swirling chaotic forms of the dead elephant and the objects that lie broken and scattered: massive iron chains, a fallen standard or pennant, the elephant goad, the curled turban of the *mahout*. And Krishna and Balarama, with their two *gopa* companions who look extremely pleased with the turn of events, move with their customary elan.

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132

MALE HEAD
Stone
1st century; from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
28 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 2827

One may at first be tempted to see this finely carved head as a portrait in the widely accepted sense, but it is far more likely that it is an idealized image. There is much to anticipate in a generalized portrait from Mathura, considering the works that are known from it, including "portrait statues" (without heads) like those of Kanishka and Chashtana (No. 124): the fullness of the face, the sensitive but highly stylized treatment of the eyes and the mouth. A moustache is added here, which makes the face look distinctive. But perhaps the sculptor intended to achieve a head exuding energy and self-assurance. This head is very likely a warrior-type, a hero who commands and is fearless on the field of battle. Unusual and extremely delicately rendered, the hero's turban is full of complicated turns and loops and is marked by differences of textures and patterns. Almost certainly the arrangement incorporated, in front and set slightly high, a boss that we also see in the headgear of so many nude figures from this early period.

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133

PARASHURAMA, WIELDER OF THE AXE
Terracotta
5th century; from Shravasti, Uttar Pradesh
State Museum, Lucknow, No. 67.6

Clearly related in date and style to the work entitled *Hanuman Fighting the Enemy* (No. 120), this fragment shows, in all likelihood, Parashurama (the sixth of ten incarnations of Vishnu) in action. Wielding his attribute and favorite weapon, the axe, Parashurama is an avatar who personifies both fierce, uncontrollable anger, and justice. Son of the sage Jamadagni, whose wish-fulfilling cow, Kamadhenu, was coveted by the mighty Kshatriya king Sahasrabahu, Parashurama was not always inclined to violence. But he was goaded by the misdeeds of that king and his countless sons. The hacking of the countless arms of his arrogant enemies is celebrated in many paintings, but this little fragment seems precisely to embody the intensity of wrath of which the texts speak; they describe the annihilation of Kshatriyas by Parashurama as many as twenty-one times. As a study in itself, the character of Parashurama is of great interest for he is celibate, utterly devoted to his parents, a warrior-Brahmin, hence a contradiction in terms; he is counted among the long-lived ones (*dirghajivis*) and appears again and again in episodes of the myths that take place ages later. He is believed by devotees to be still living somewhere in the remoteness of the mountains.

The Gupta sculptor working at the village level employs here a familiar sharp, incised line to indicate features and also a wide range of patterns. These lines define the brief garment worn by the sagelike warrior, as well as the knotted, fluttering scarf that flies behind him. The expressive force is best seen in the face, with its flaring nostrils, the biting of the lower lip, the wide-open eyes, and the anger in the eyebrows. The matted locks are tied into a topknot; a small, heavy necklet stays close to the body, but the large earrings dangle and shake vigorously.

It is likely that this tile formed a part of a narrative sequence, with the individual tiles depicting climactic moments of selected episodes in a decorative scheme.

Literature
See No. 120.

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134

KRISHNA SUBDUES THE ELEPHANT KUVALAYAPIDA
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 69
Gouache on paper
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.118

The poetic element in this great *Bhagavata* series yields sometimes to tumultuous action, as here. As Krishna and his brother Balarama approach the arena where Kamsa, the evil uncle and the root of so much trouble, has tried to lure Krishna, many impediments bar their way. Among them is the mighty elephant Kuvalayapida, whom drivers had clear instructions to goad in Krishna's direction in order to trample him and his companions. Krishna, fresh from the triumph of subduing two great wrestlers, makes light of this challenge. As the texts says, he almost plays with the elephant, now slinking under his great feet, now holding him by the tail, until finally, with a great heave, he hurls the elephant to the ground, killing him and his keepers.

Here the elephant lies dead, and Krishna and Balarama have pulled out his tusks. Krishna leaps to the mountainous form to seize a keeper by the hair and beat him to death. All this happens within the sight of Kamsa the king, who perches, fully accoutered, on the roof top of his palace chamber, his attendants at the left and Balarama and a *gopa* at the right.

It is possible that the person shown being beaten to death also depicts Kamsa. Suggestions to this effect lie in the similarity of the person being killed and the one seated, the major difference being the absence of the helmet. Another painting from this same set shows Krishna grappling with Kuvalayapida; thus the present painting might logically come immediately after it, depicting the climax in which Kamsa is killed.

In any event, the vigor of this magnificent painting is quite remarkable: Krishna's leaping form, the sprawling elephant, the falling and cowering figures at the left, are all superbly handled. Energy resides not only in the moving figures, but also animates the figures that simply stand and watch. A sinuous rhythm is skilfully built up through the manipulation of accessories, scarves, and tassels that adorn these figures. In this series, one almost begins to take to take for granted the complex but controlled geometry of the composition, the packing-in of an extraordinary amount of what would otherwise be called decorative details. The series is sometimes ascribed to Mitharam and Nana, two persons whose names appear on many leaves of the set, and who may well have been the painters. Despite damage to the folios, these paintings glow with color and leap to life with the verve of line.

Literature

See No. 69; published in Karl J. Khandalavala and Jagdish Mittal, "The *Bhagavata* MSS. from Palam and Isarda—A Consideration in Style," *Lalit Kala*, 1961, No. 16, pl. XIV, fig. 4(a).

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135

KRISHNA QUELLS THE SERPENT KALIYA
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
28 x 36 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 58.18/10

Among the valorous acts of Krishna as a young boy is his much celebrated subduing of the serpent Kaliya. One day, the legend says, the life-giving river Yamuna, flowing along the Vraja country, becomes an agent of death, for whoever drinks its water falls down senseless. Krishna instantly knows the cause: the waters, he guesses, are being poisoned by Kaliya, "king of snakes, black as soot," who has moved into one of the river's pools. Making up his mind to clear the Yamuna of him, Krishna drives into the waters of that great pool, to the despair of his companions and his parents when they hear the news, for if indeed a great serpent is poisoning the waters, what would little Krishna be able to do? But Krishna is determined and, entering the serpent's lair, challenges him. Kaliya flies into a rage at being disturbed, "his upper body coiled about in the air like massing clouds. His mouths were fiery, with tongues flicking, and his hoods were spread wide." Between the courageous Krishna and the enraged serpent-king a fierce combat ensues. Although initially worsted, Krishna brings the fearful enemy under control, snapping his jaws and pounding his hoods with his miraculously increased weight. Eventually Kaliya begs for mercy, as do his many wives. Krishna, generous in triumph, spares Kaliya's life on condition that he leave the Yamuna.

Unlike other pictorial versions of this episode, this painting stays very close to the text, for after Kaliya is quelled, the text says, he returns to land with Krishna still pressing his hoods under his victorious feet. The sculptors of the south gave their own form to the episode. In this work, the struggle has not yet ended; Krishna's anger still informs his action. The contrast between Kaliya's weakening, convulsive movements, the piteous, supplicant figures of his serpent-wives, and Krishna's angry, defiant stance is complete. The work is couched in the same elegant manner as the rest of the series, its line sinuous and fluid, its coloring impeccable, and its understanding of the spirit of the episode nearly perfect.

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136

THE EMERGENCE OF VARAHA, THE BOAR INCARNATION OF VISHNU
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
21.5 x 32 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. E–131

A great deal is at stake, for the earth has been taken into depths of the waters by demons led by the mighty Hiranyaksha, "of the golden eyes." It is now Vishnu's duty, as the text of the *Purana* says, to redeem and save her. He descends in the form of the great primal boar, his third incarnation in a series that spans eons. Appearing in this powerful emanation, Vishnu announces to the powers of earth and the regions below it that he has come to subdue evil and restore *dharma*, the law of righteousness, which alone can sustain this universe and keep it on its course.

As Varaha manifests himself, "the three worlds shake with crashing sounds that reverberate in all directions." Thunder and lightning lash the atmosphere, while a rain of snakes and streams of blood pour from the sky. Rocks come hurtling down, and the bones of those consumed in the jaws of time rattle around. Trembling with fear and unable to face these powerful visions, all beings flee in terror—sages and devotees, demons and goblins, and *gandharvas* and *vidyadharas* of all descriptions. In the midst of them stands Varaha, the embodiment of energy, feet planted firmly on the earth and not merely holding the flaming discus that is his attribute (*chakra*), but whirling it at furious speed around his extended finger.

What ensues is a prolonged and bitter struggle against the erring demon, over which the painter of this superb series lingers so long. Even he, from whose brushwork of such energy and innovation emerged, must have found it difficult to sustain in the series the quality of this painting, for it is not only magnificent in color, it captures with abounding conviction the tumult of the occasion. One begins to anticipate great things, seeing this Varaha.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting,* New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills,* London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot; B.N. Goswamy, *The Bhagavata Paintings from Mankot,* 1978; *Krishna the Divine Lover,* Lausanne, 1982; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna,* West Franklin, 1980.

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137

WARRIOR CARRYING A LONG SWORD
Gouache on paper
Deccan, middle of the 17th century; from a Bijapur workshop
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 864

Against a bare background somewhat damaged and then repaired, a bearded young warrior stands with legs slightly apart, as if moving forward in a slow step. In his raised right arm he holds aloft an uncommonly long sword, its hilt protecting the entire arm. Another sword, a *sruvedone*, is slung across his body, suspended from a belt tied to his waist. A dagger, only its handle visible, is stuck into his waistband to his right. The tall, stately, turbaned figure is clad in a *jama* tied under the right arm; several lappets hang from it to the waist. Loose striped trousers, worn slightly high so as not to interfere with swift movement, and shoes with pointed ends at the back complete the picture. The stance, the raised hand holding the sword, but above all the firm set of the mouth, help to emphasize the warrior's heroic, martial character. Rather than a battle or a heroic deed, the painter opts for a seemingly simple portrait through which he evokes the energetic, defiant character of the man.

An inscription in Persian, obliterated except for the word *mirza*, appears at bottom left. The suggestion of a Deccani connection in the work comes from the treatment of the form and is strengthened by the shape of the sword, clearly Deccani or Maharashtran.

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138

RAJA SIDH SEN OF MANDI AS AN INCARNATION OF SHIVA
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Mandi workshop
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 10222

The memory of the ruler Sidh Sen (1684–1727) still lives in the minds of the people of Mandi, that distant mountainous state in the Pahari area. He is remembered as a mountain of a man, possessed of magical powers, so strong he could crush a coconut in the palm of his left hand, and a great devotee of Shiva and the goddess. A remarkable number of portraits of him have survived, most in this rather dry but deeply affecting, stark style: now as a warrior on the field of battle, now walking with a resolute step, attended by retainers and courtiers, now as a devotee wending his way to a temple, piously holding a platter of the materials of worship. Almost always he is portrayed larger than life, cutting a remarkable figure with his enormous stature and powerful, unkempt visage.

Here the painter exceeds himself in a way, for he identifies the ruler with Shiva—four-armed, clad in a tiger skin, wearing long garlands of *dhatura* leaves and *rudraksha* beads, both sacred to Shiva. In India, as in other parts of southeast Asia, there is a tradition of seeing kings as cast in the mold of gods—one thinks of the Devaraja cult—but even within this context, this is an unusual portrait. It is without doubt a portrait of Sidh Sen and not a rendering of Shiva, for Shiva is ordinarily represented quite differently in Mandi painting. The god's demeanor has been transferred to the raja, represented as a veritable god among men.

In addition to the strong Shiva look, the painter has attempted to combine in this aspect of the ruler certain features of other powerful gods. The tabor drum and the horn are attributes of Shiva, while the discus belongs to Vishnu and the trident could easily have come from Durga.

Another portrait of Sidh Sen in this same aspect, in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Art, Hyderabad, was exhibited in London in 1982 with the caption "Raja Sidh Sen as an Ascetic."

Literature

Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Mandi; *In the Image of Man*, London, 1982, No. 292.

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139

THE YOUNG RAJA SIDH SEN OF MANDI
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 4th quarter of the 17th century; from a Mandi workshop
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.258



The raja seen here was the kind of man legends are made of: large and remarkably vigorous, he was known for his extraordinary powers even in his own time, for it was reported that he had a little *gutka* which, when placed in his mouth, enabled him to fly through the air. Each day, it was said in hushed tones in Mandi, he would speed to the source of the Ganges in the morning and come back to attend to affairs of state by the time the rest of the town was up. These powers he possessed, so the belief went, from being a great devotee of Shiva and his consort. But even aside from magic, he was a man of great personal prowess, a warrior cast in the mold of the great men of the past.

In this rather early image from Sidh Sen's period, the raja stands with both hands resting on the hilt of his long sword, face to face with his *ishtas*, Shiva and the Devi. Behind him an attendant, somewhat dwarfed by the stature of his master, holds a tall peacock-tail fan. But the raja himself is shown nearly as tall as the two deities who bless him with their presence. The elaborate, colorful rendering of the deities superimposed upon standard iconographic formulae merits attention: wild and unkempt, Shiva, with his matted locks, his necklace of human heads, the leopard skin around his loins, and the somewhat mannish but bejeweled aspect of Devi who holds in one hand a severed head like a bowl, are rendered with great flamboyance. But the focus shifts from them the moment one sees their mounts, the Nandi bull and the tiger, who turn and look up with eager expectation, not at the deities but at the raja, as if he were a deity in his own right, a reflection of the glory of the divine couple. The enormous hands and feet of the raja, the tiger-handled dagger in his waistband, his firm and resolute look, and the great flare of his skirt impart weight and presence to his figure. An uncommon detail, little mountain peaks, appears at the bottom, possibly to suggest that this face-to face encounter between the deities and the devotee who mirrors their glory on earth takes place on Kailasha Mountain, the eternal abode of Shiva and his consort.

Literature

W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Mandi.

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140

A RAJA OUT HAWKING
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 4th quarter of the 18th century; from a Bikaner workshop
Collection of Mr. Suresh Neotia, Calcutta

There is exquisite detail in this painting of a ruler out hawking. Seated on a spirited white and grey charger, the prince, with his companions and retainers, occupies only the lower half of the picture; the rest depicts a flat plain with an eminence in the middle. The sharp edge of a lake and the far distance where an elephant, evidently belonging to the prince, is stationed across this rolling, receding landscape stretch below the brilliant formations of birds in flight with hawks stooping upon them in mid-air. The colors of the birds as they take wing and speeding hawks are extremely finely painted and worth careful study, for it is here that the painter displays his skills most clearly.

Conforming to the masculine, sporting image that Rajput chiefs nurtured so carefully, the prince here is shown indulging his outdoor passion. Elaborate preparations for the hawking expedition are evident. Hunting dogs and clever retainers are part of the entourage; attendants and cooks have been brought along to dress and cook the captured game. But the great expanse of land, the freedom of the birds, and the lyrical movement of the hawks give the work a strange poetic quality. The painter has lavished careful attention on little details—the spiky trees with each leaf clearly articulated, tall rising turbans, the accoutrements of the horse, the embroidered hawking gloves.

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141

A HAWK POUNCES ON A CRANE (AN ALLEGORY)
Tinted drawing on paper
Rajasthan, 1814; from a Deogarh workshop
L.D. Institute, Ahmedabad

In many paintings of hunting expeditions, hawks stooping at cranes or other birds are brought in naturally as an essential part of the hunt. Here the painter moves so close to a hawk as its talons strike a crane that the bird and his prey become the main subject matter of this beautiful, spirited drawing. The inscription in Devanagari above and below the margins adds further interest to the picture, for it mentions the name of Rawat Godul Das, evidently of Deogarh, whom we know from many other works from this workshop, and yet another Rawat, possibly of another fief (*thikana*) in the neighborhood; the inscription also mentions that it is in the hand of the painter Bagta, also well known. Mention of the Rawat of Deogarh on a picture in which he does not figure himself comes as a surprise, and one wonders if this drawing is not meant to be an allegory of some kind, showing Rawat Gokul Das triumphant over a rival. If this reading is correct, Gokul Das is the hawk and the crane is an adversary.

Allegories interested the Indian artist, as can be seen in many early sculptures and Mughal paintings. From his other works, Bagta is not known to have concerned himself with political statements of the kind made here. But he gives us in this drawing a sharp and shrewd work that makes a departure from his involvement with his patron, the Rawat of Deogarh, and his several passions.

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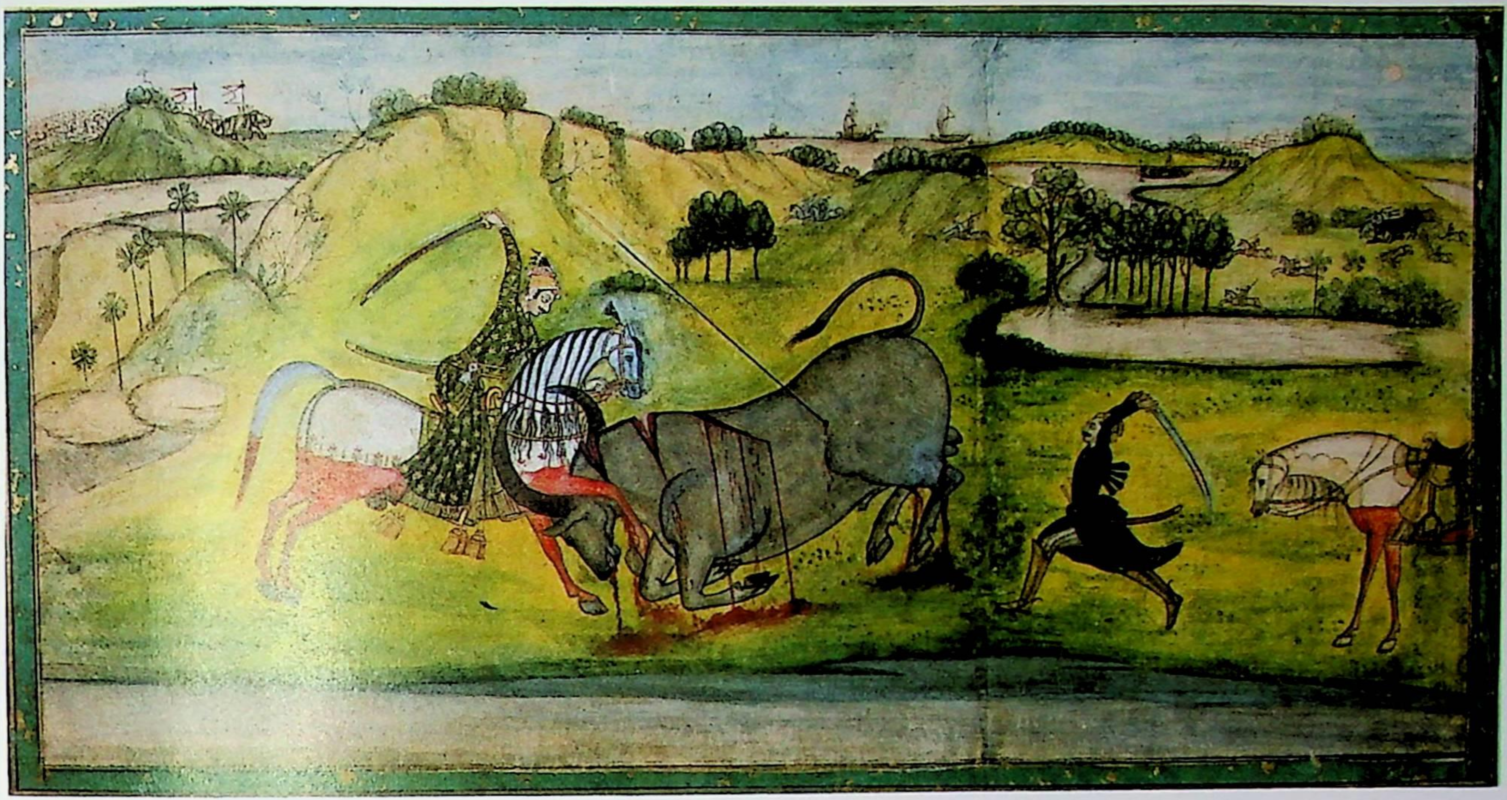
142

A RAGING BATTLE
Watercolor on paper
Paithan, 4th quarter of the 19th century
36 x 46 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 83.63

The energy which informs the battle scenes in Paithan painting is in a class by itself. Whole pages seem to burst with vitality, and even though the folk painters from Paithan (who carried these works from village to village, displaying them to the accompaniment of music and song to simple villagers, an indication of the long Indian tradition of "picture showmen") had developed a highly terse, conventional style, it is not difficult to take in their power. Here, a hero on elephant-back aims deadly arrows at his adversary, a five-headed figure fighting a hopeless battle as arrows fly, swords clash, and fragments swirl around. The scale of the trees at the bottom of the picture, which follows so closely the tradition of leather puppets, is dramatically altered appropriately to the language of the style, for the focus already is on action here.

The leaf is from a very late and unidentified series. Although its coloring is harsh and jagged, it seems somehow to fit the heroic mood of the work.

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143

RAJA SAHASMAL HUNTING
Gouache on paper
Kishangarh, 4th quarter of the 18th century
29 x 45.3 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 63.796

This prince we know from another and better-known painting, also a hunting scene, but showing the moment after the hunt when he is surrounded by admiring courtiers and retainers. Here the prince is seen in wonderful action, as a wild buffalo is encountered in the wilds of Kishangarh. A companion on foot, having dismounted from a horse, hacks at the massive beast with his sword from the back, while the prince himself smites the neck with a mighty stroke that nearly severs it. There is great energy in the work, something for which we, accustomed to those delicate and poetic visions of Radha and Krishna, are almost unprepared in a Kishangarh painting. The coloring is extremely delicate, and the interest of the painter in extensive stretches of land that discreetly recede, a characteristic known to us from other Kishangarh work, is in evidence once again.

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144

PAIR OF LEOGRYPHS
Stone
5th century; Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
91 x 55 x 19 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 49.115
90 x 58 cm
Archaeological Museum, Sarnath, No. 4924

These spirited architectural reliefs must have formed part of a sculptural scheme and stood facing each other, possibly as an entrance or doorway. The motif of a composite animal is a favorite with the Indian sculptor. The human figures are represented full face in contrast to the leogryphs, who are shown in profile. The figures appear endowed with an inner strength that they can let loose at a moment's notice. The heroic poses of the human figures are echoed in the stance of the leogryphs. Together they represent figures of strength. The arching eyebrows, puckering lips, and treatment of the eyes are all typical Gupta elements.



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145

PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR
Gouache on paper
On verso, *gujjar hath paniya* in Takri characters
(The Gujjar, holding in his bed the Paniya Sword[?])
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1236



The figure of this determined-looking man wearing a beautifully flowered *jama* and standing against a flat, intense yellow ground is quickly etched on the mind. The man makes a bold impression, as he holds up a long curving sword in his right hand and fingers its scabbard lightly with the left. All this goes perfectly with the expression on the face, its thin pressed lips and hawklike look. Much else demands attention: the flamboyant turban with feather tassels and flower shoots stuck in it in the manner favored in the hills, the pattern and flare of the *jama*, the coatlike garment, the waistband and its hanging end, the striped trousers delicately wrinkled, the embroidered slip-on shoes. But perhaps more than these, the painter wishes us to notice the uncommonly large and muscular arm which holds the sword. There is little doubt that he is presented as a warrior, fearless on the field of battle.

The issue of portraiture in the context of Indian art is complex: while there is very sharp observation and naturalistic intent in a great deal of Mughal portraiture, justly famed for its qualities, in the more Indian tradition of Rajasthani and Pahari work, portraits take on a different meaning, the emphasis shifting to idealization and abstraction, not at the expense of observation, but superimposed upon it. This portrait is not that of a historical prince but of a warrior who must have been widely admired for his prowess. The work belongs to a large group of portraits of remarkable quality which were turned out by a Mankot workshop in the first and second quarters of the eighteenth century.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, "Paintings from Mankot," *Lalit Kala*, No. 6, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, I, pp. 371–381; B.N. Goswamy, "Essence and Appearance: Some Notes on Indian Portraiture," in *Facets of Indian Art*, London, (forthcoming).

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146

A LION
Red sandstone
3rd century; from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
94 x 49 x 31 cm
Govt. Museum, Mathura; No. 00.04

This figure of a half-engaged lion turned slightly to the right with his left paw in front, his mouth open, tongue sticking out, is one among many of its kind, though not of its quality, in the Mathura Museum. Its back, plain except for the head which is carved, and the presence of a base suggest that this figure formed part of some architectural scheme, perhaps the base of an enormous high throne. The word for a throne in India is *simhasana* (lion-seat). Even though not many thrones from the early period have survived, the large number of sculptures of standing royal or religious figures with lions carved underneath the pedestal leaves no doubt about the tradition. Vogel had concluded in his section devoted to lions (Mathura Museum catalogue) that in ancient Gandhara, such half-engaged lions were used to decorate and support the basements of *stupas*, a tradition evidently followed in Mathura, judging from the number of lion figures found in the area.

Representing both the Buddha, "lion of the Shakya Clan" (as on Mauryan pillar capitals), and the idea of majesty itself, the lion has a compelling presence. In the art of India, however, the lion is rarely represented naturalistically, something not true of other noble animals of equal size and power. There is a strong element of stylization in its renderings, for the purpose with which they are carved is to communicate the essence of regal majesty. In the present work, the highly stylized mane, the sharp and commanding angles of the eyebrows, the emphasis on the wide-open mouth and the tongue, the powerful rectangular paws, all suggest that the artist was abstracting the form intentionally.

It is interesting to recall in this context the representation of lions in paintings of the Rajput schools, when they are shown not in a natural setting like a forest but serve as the vehicles, mounts, of Durga. Then they take on curious and fabulous aspects—sprouting wings, combining the features of the tiger, looking far more sleek and nimble than in lifelike representations.

Literature

J.P. Vogel, *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum of Mathura*, Allahabad, 1910; *Ancient Sculptures from India*, Tokyo, 1984, No. 34.

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BHAYANAKA: THE TERRIBLE SENTIMENT

भयानकरस

BIBHATSA: THE ODIOUS SENTIMENT

बीभत्सरस

FEAR (*bhaya*) IS THE enduring emotional state that leads to the experience of Bhayanaka, the terrible sentiment. Its determinants are "hideous noise, sight of ghosts, panic and anxiety due to [untimely cry of] jackals and owls, staying in an empty house or forest, sight of death, or captivity of dear ones, or news of it, or discussions about it." Bharata refers to the consequents in this connection as "trembling of the hands and the feet, horripilation, change of color and loss of voice." The complementary emotional states are "paralysis, perspiration, choking voice, horripilation, trembling, loss of voice, change of color, fear, stupefaction, dejection, agitation, restlessness, inactivity, fear, epilepsy and death and the like." Bharata also speaks of the characteristics of fear being "looseness of the limbs, the mouth and the eyes, paralysis of the thighs, looking around with uneasiness, dryness of the drooping mouth, palpitation of the heart, and so on." All these arise from "natural fear," but "artificially shown fear" should also, in his view, be represented by these very conditions except that in this case their representation "should be milder."

In his discussion of the state of fear, Bharata speaks of the kind arising from "embarrassment due to offending one's superiors and the king, seeing terrible objects, and hearing awful things." Vishwanatha cites a passage from the *Ramayana* when Hanuman appears at Lanka and causes great destruction:

> The eunuchs fled, having abandoned shame, because of their not being reckoned among men; the dwarf, in terror, ensconces himself within the loose and wide trousers of the chamberlain; the mountaineers, the guardians of the hounds, acted in a style accordant with their name, while the hump-backs, fearing that they may be seen by the monkey who has occasioned all this alarm, cowering down, slink quietly off.

The examples that a person familiar with the art of sculpture and painting would pick to illustrate the state of fear would obviously differ, but the idea is well communicated in this passage.

Not far from the emotion of fear is that of disgust or aversion (*jugupsa*) which leads to the odious sentiment, Bibhatsa. The state is described as being created by determinants "like hearing of unpleasant, offensive, impure and harmful things or seeing them or discussing them." The consequents, for the purposes of representation on stage, are: "stopping movement of all the limbs, narrowing down of the mouth, vomiting, spitting, shaking the limbs [in disgust] and the like." The complementary emotional states that lead toward disgust are "epileptic fit, delusion, agitation, fainting, sickness, death. . . ." Disgusting sights, tastes, smell, touch, and sound causing uneasiness are spoken of in this connection. Vishwanatha mentions "stinking flesh and fiber and fat." A favorite illustration of the writers on the subject of the odious is from Bhavabhuti's *Malati Madhava*, Act V:

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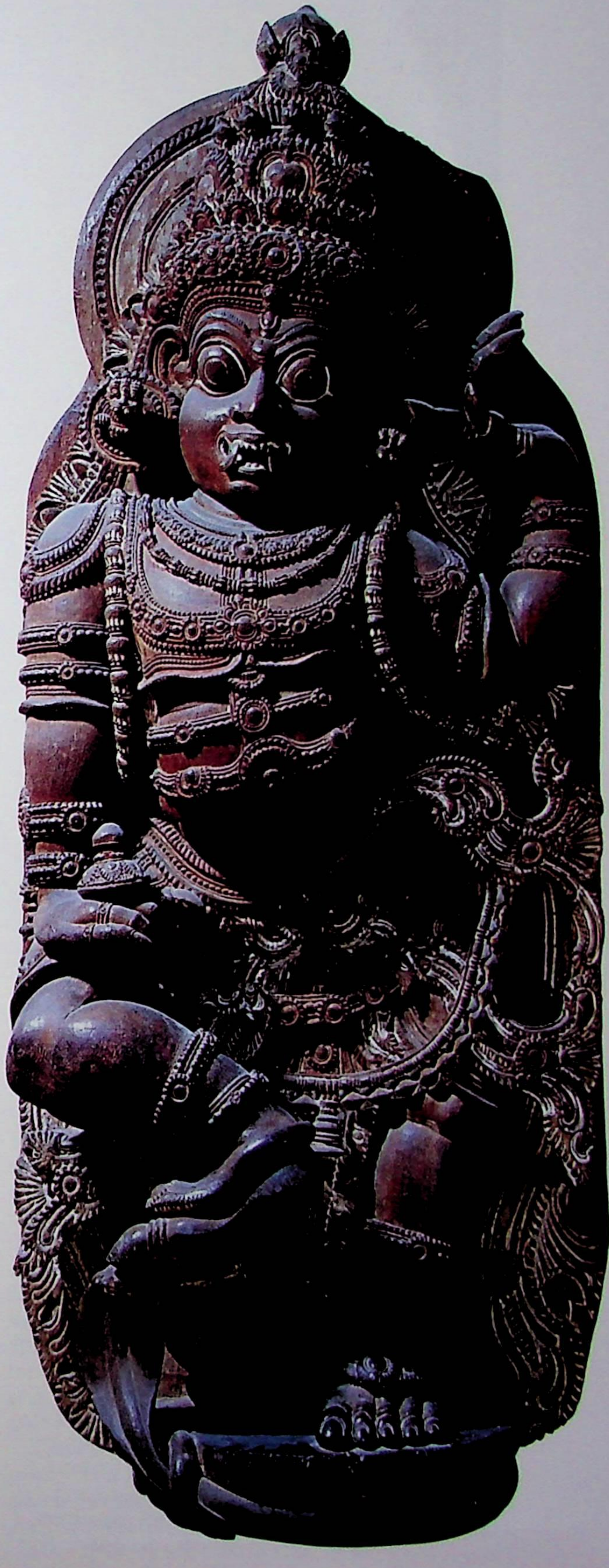
> Having first torn and stripped off the skin, then having devoured the swollen and violently stinking lumps of flesh that were readily to be got from such parts of the mass as the shoulder, buttocks and back—casting his eyes within the skeleton and with his teeth displayed, the beggarly ghost is eating at his ease, from the skeleton placed in his lap what flesh remains upon the bones or is to be found at the joints.

The general question of how any kind of "delight" can arise from such a passage or from things causing such aversion has been briefly discussed in the introduction. Yet, this transformation of pain into pleasure, possible only through the distance from which the spectator experiences it, is a fact. Sights and events painful in themselves do not necessarily repel "when viewed from a psychic distance," as the texts say, and are entirely capable of yielding an aesthetic experience. Sculpture and painting offer superb renderings of both fear and disgust. While the former is sometimes a necessary component of the hero's anger (for fear arises in the person at the receiving end), fear is not represented or interpreted in this context alone. Painters and sculptors evoke it through other situations. Disgust is more easily understood, however; renderings of the goddess in her Tantric and frightening forms, especially in her representations as a *yogini* or one of the ten Mahavidyas, yield the sculptor and the painter great opportunities, and some singularly affecting works result. There is no turning away, no squeamishness, when it comes to showing the dread aspect of the deity in Indian art, and the subject is pursued with a remarkable degree of enthusiasm, for it is all taken to be part of the total human experience.

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147

DVARAPALA: A PAIR OF GUARDIANS OF THE SHRINE
Wood with polychromy
19th century; from Kerala
157 x 60 cm
Collection of Mr. C.L. Bharany, New Delhi, Nos. 5847, 5848



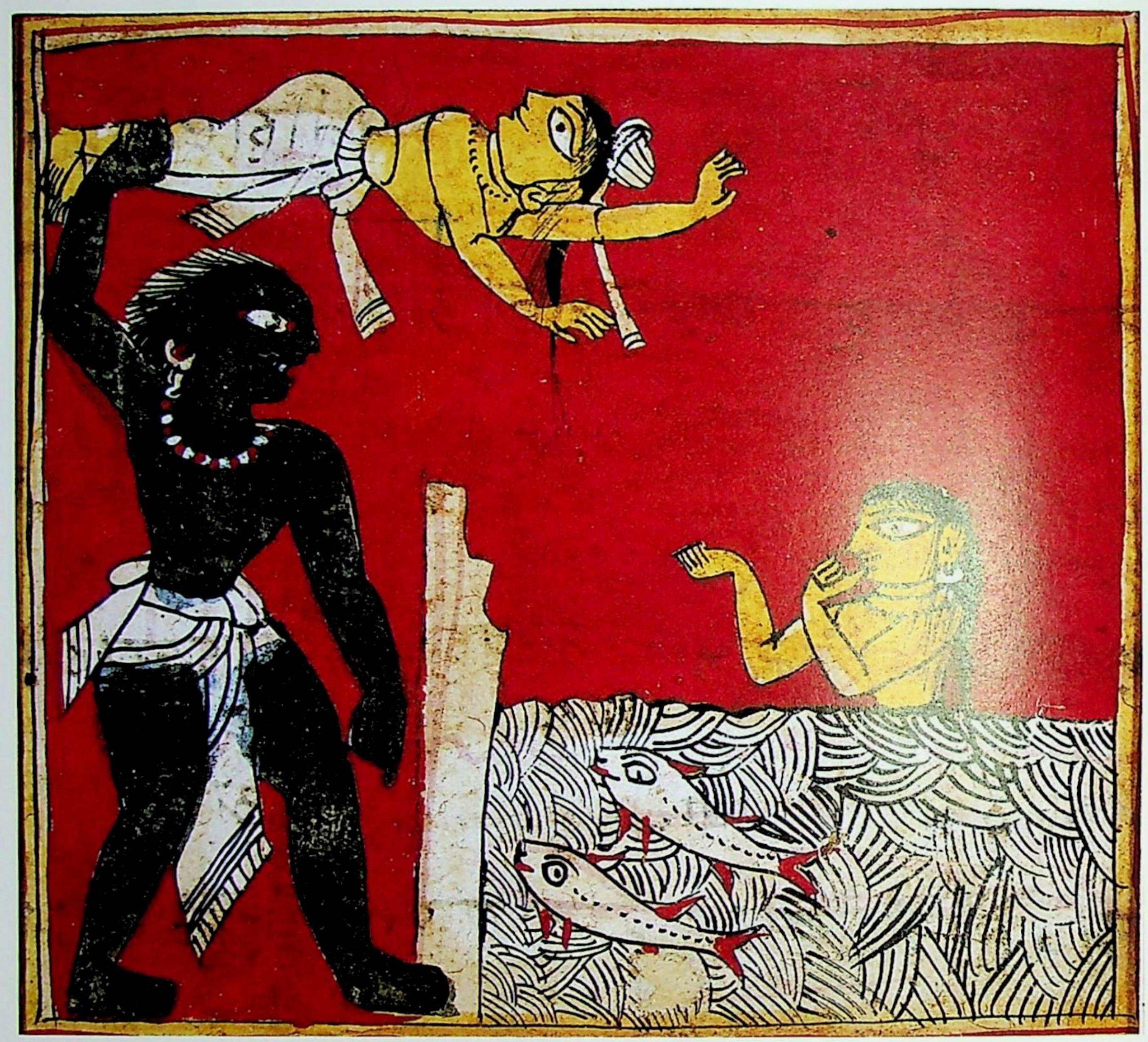
Considering that the forces of evil lurk around the corner, ready to strike or to take over, the house of the gods themselves needs to be guarded with resolute care. Ideas of auspiciousness, benediction, lie behind the representation of Ganesha, remover of obstacles, and of Ganga and Yamuna, the river goddesses, at the entrance to temples. Garuda the sun-bird or Nandi the noble bull stand outside Vaishnava or Shaiva shrines as humble devotees, waiting in case they are needed by their divine riders. But *dvarapalas*, literally "protectors of the doors," serve as stern guardians keeping watch on the shrines, much like doorkeepers outside royal palaces. Generally conceived as enormous in size and powerful of bulk, they sometimes take on a dread aspect, as here in this late but superbly crafted figure from Kerala. Ornate and rich, loaded with jewelry, dressed like some royal personage, this *dvarapala* draws attention to himself not for his sumptuous costume but for his threatening, energetic appearance and posture. There are indications of the forces that he can unleash upon the unfriendly: the snake upon whom he treads; the dragonlike end of the long necklace he wears like a loose wrap; those long and fearful clawlike nails and the fangs that protrude from his wide-open mouth. The staring eyes, broad and spiralling "like a conch shell," as the texts say, keep alert vigil. Clearly the figure bears the impress of Kathakali, that majestic dance-drama native to the land from which this figure comes. One sees this in the masklike face, the stylized stance with a hand brought across the body to rest on the head of the club, the long nails, the legs disposed as if in a dance. The headdress in particular, with a flat circular disc at the back resembling an aureole, is straight out of that theater world.

Judging from the vertical *tilak* mark on the forehead, this figure must have been meant for a Vaishnava shrine.

Literature

Aditi, London, 1982, color pl. 37.

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148

A DEMON CASTS DOWN A HERO
From the same *Mrigavat* series as No. 3
Gouache on paper
Pre-Mughal, 2nd quarter of the 16th century
18.9 x 17.8 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 7926

In the involved tale of a prince's love for Mrigavati, the doe-eyed heroine of this Avadhi romance of the early sixteenth century, it is not clear where this episode fits. But the appearance of the demon, a sorcerer perhaps, causes no surprise, since the tale has many such twists. The hero and a companion are here bathing in a pool when the demon picks the young man up by the ankles, lifts him into the air as he struggles helplessly, and casts him down with a crash. The companion, still waist-deep in the pool, raises her hands in a gesture of both pleading and wonder at the sudden appearance of this apparition. There is some uncertainty about who the demon has seized, for the dress appears to be that of a young woman, but the absence of any clear delineation of breasts and the presence of the Kulahdar turban falling from the head indicate that it is probably a male figure.

The painter succeeds in investing the leaf with energy and movement. The fearsome figure of the demon, with his large staring eyes, grinning mouth, prominent teeth, and bristling hair, makes quite an impression. The darkness of the form and its colossal size, together with the determined action that extends right down to the left arm held parallel to the body, are all part of the image and the occasion. The fear of the remaining bather is evident; the painter transfers her wide-eyed look to the two fish swimming in the water, which turn to look at this inhuman and awesome figure intent upon such destruction.

Literature
See No. 3.

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149

BHASURA, ONE OF THE MANY BHAIRAVAS
On verso, Sanskrit verse; *Bhasura Bhairava* in Takri characters on top
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 1970 (W)

Of the same format as the much better-known Devi series, this figure of Bhairava, identified through a Takri inscription on the top red border, also belongs to what must have formed a coherent, homogenous group with Tantric manifestations of the gods. Relatively short in stature, ashen-dark of body, Bhairava is shown with great clarity here as being connected with Shiva: the third eye on the forehead, the crescent moon, the matted locks, the snake coiled around the neck like an ornament, the tiger-skin garment, all speak eloquently of this relationship. Here, Bhairava has only two arms and holds only two objects, a lotus bud and a conch shell, also strongly connected with Vishnu. This Bhasura form of Bhairava is not often encountered in painting, but even the standard lists of his sixty-four manifestations show great variations across time and regions. A syncretism is hinted at through the Vaishnava emblems shown so prominently. Another strong feature lending the figure a different kind of aura is the row of flames rising from the shoulder and leaping high into space. The figure is set against a flat yellow ground, now slightly discolored; the strip of the earth below is marked by slight vegetation, and the sky occupies a narrow slice of the background at the top.

There is no great awesomeness of nature that the painter aims at in this rendering of Bhairava, but clearly the deity remains of the *ugra* kind, a certain dread associated almost always with the form.

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150

BHAIRAVA ADORED
Sandstone
10th century; from Madhya Pradesh, probably Shahdol
156.2 x 66 cm
Collection of Thakur Sahib of Sohagpur, Shahdol

Kramrisch speaks of "the raging agony of the god at the split second when Time ceases and Shiva becomes Bhairava." Bhairava protects the universe (*bharana*) and has a terrible temper (*bhishana*). When he cuts off Brahma's head in a moment of unbridled anger, Shiva has to wander about with Brahma's skull sticking to his hand, paying for his sin and taking on a new aspect. In this form, awe-inspiring and fearsome, he moves around until, at the sacred banks of the Ganga in Varanasi, his sin is expiated and he is once again himself. But even in this form, which later multiplies into at least sixty-four different variants, Shiva receives homage and adoration. A sinner himself, he yet possesses the power to lead others to redemption. But the aspect of death never leaves him: like a shadow it stays and grows. He spells destruction and therefore attracts images of death: skulls, bones, severed heads, serpents, and the like.

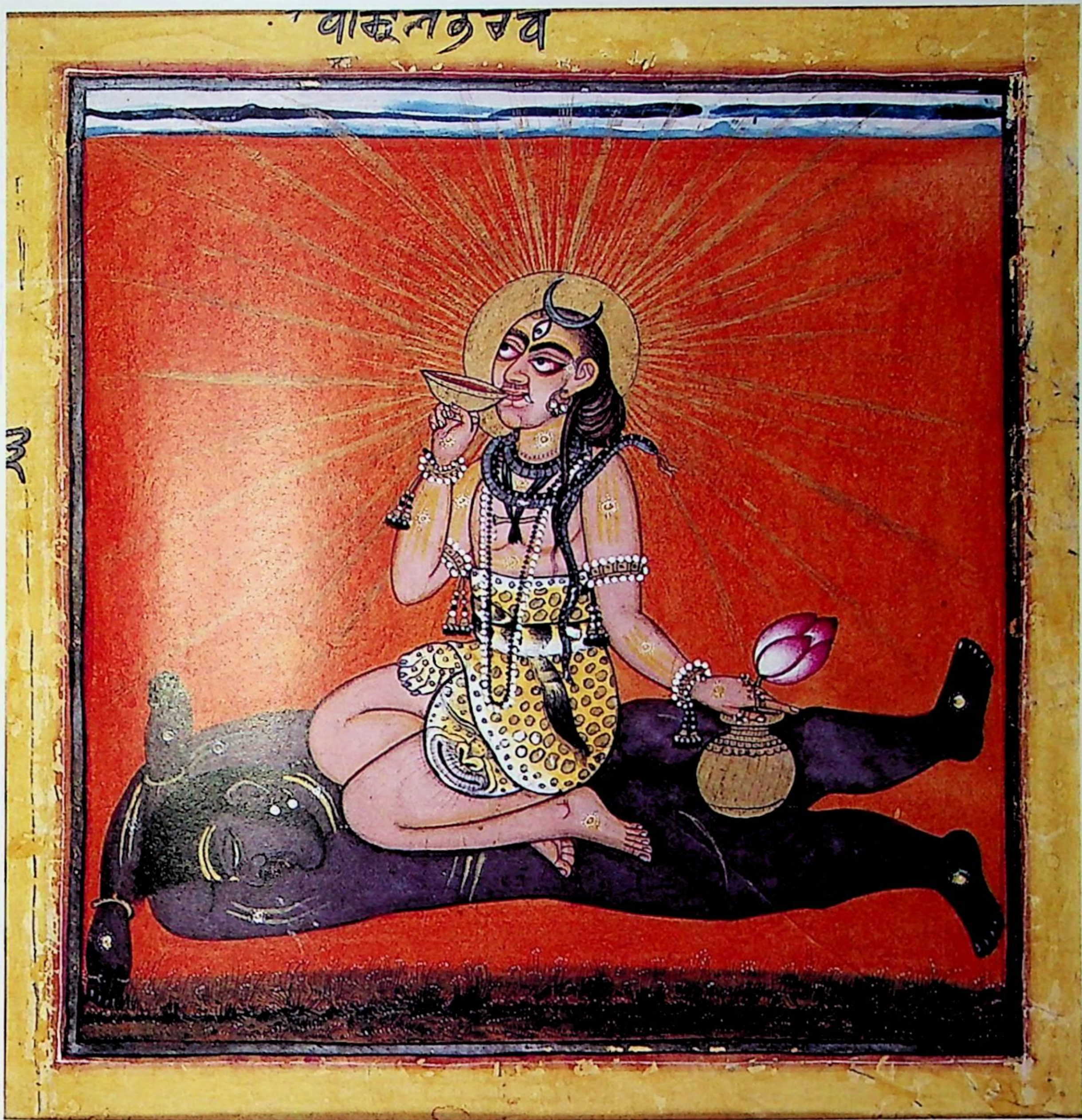
This exquisitely carved image of Bhairava, four-armed and heavily bejewelled with golden ornaments as well as with torques of serpents and headbands of grinning skulls, holds rather delicately in one finely carved hand a long staff topped by a skull but resting on a tendril close to his feet, a sign combining both life and death. Another left hand holds a bell with a looped handle; a right hand holds an unidentified object close to the chest. A garland of skulls, the nimbus of concentric circles of matted hair, an open mouth, and closed, inward-drawn eyes complete the picture. Around this powerful figure are arranged, in the fashion of so much medieval work, a whole range of real and imaginary men and animals. While leogryphs and *makaras* rear heads on either side, devotees kneel and bend and stand with hands folded in adoration. The small chipped figures at the top are dwarfed by comparison with the detailed and precise treatment reserved by the sculptor for the figures of female devotees disposed close to his feet. Bearing fly-whisks and curious rushwork baskets slung over their arms, they form a lovely contrast to Bhairava's anger and fearsomeness.

The attention paid to ornamentation, the stencilwork of great refinement directly behind Bhairava's figure, the filigree treatment of jewelry and garlands, the flair with which the manes of the leogryphs and the curving trunks of the *makaras* are treated, leave no doubt that the artist's concern for making the image in its usual mold of loveliness remains, despite his subject. In his eyes, Bhairava was no different from Shiva in more benevolent form, for the death he represents is but an episode in the cycle of life.

Literature

C. Sivaramamurti, *L'Art en Inde*, Paris, 1974, No. 604; Donald Stadtner, "Kalachuri Art at Singhpur," *Oriental Art*, 28:3, 1982, pp. 270–278; Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.*, Washington, D.C., 1985, No. 51.

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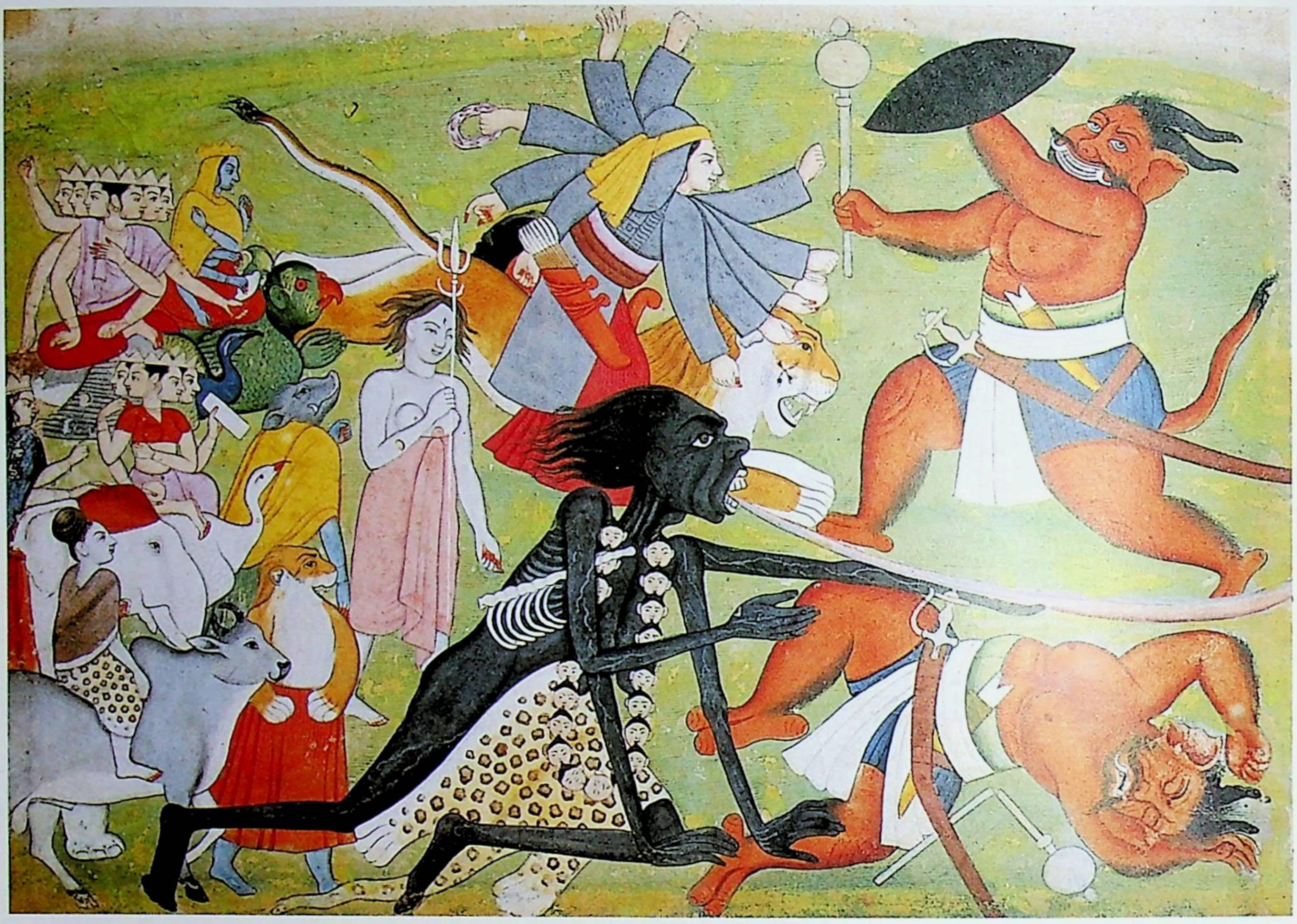


151

SHIVA AS VIKRAL BHAIRAVA
From a Tantric series
On verso, top, Sanskrit verse: *Vikral Bhairava* in Takri characters
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century
16.6 x 16.1 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.211

To the images of the great goddess, long among the earliest known in Pahari painting, other Tantric images of male deities, principally Bhairava in his numerous forms, can be added. Of the sixty-four major forms of Shiva-Bhairava, this one, Vikral Bhairava, the Hideous One, shows him seated on folded legs upon a prostrate, dark-colored dead body, its legs splayed, arms folded above the head, eyes turned, the mouth gaping. Bhairava himself, clad only in the skin of a leopard, its tail tied around his waist, sits lightly, holding a golden vessel and a lotus bud in the left hand, and drinking from a cup held in the right hand. The fierce, reddened vertical eye on the forehead and the crescent moon establish the Shiva identity; long matted hair is loosely rolled at the back, but a loose strand falls in front; a serpent flicking its forked tongue curls around the neck twice and leans across the shoulders; a string of black thread holds a small horizontally placed object against the chest, evidently the little whistle associated with Shaiva ascetics. Small things tend to soften the image—the golden nimbus with spreading rays, the elaborate jewelry studded with raised pearls, the lotus bud, the caste marks on the body—but they affect only marginally the terrifying impact of this form of Bhairava. Evidently images of this category fitted into the occult worship ritual of Shiva and the goddess.

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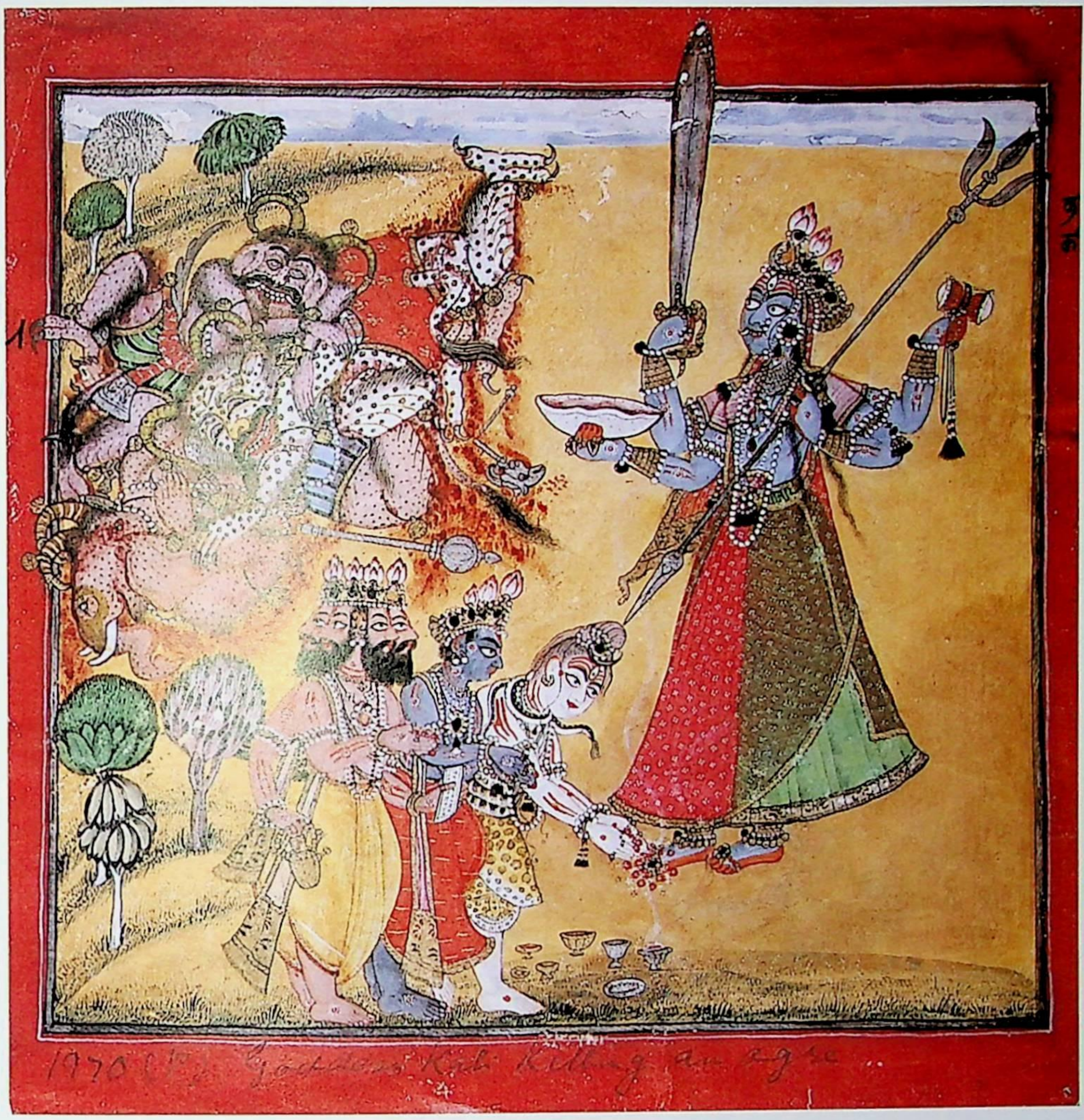
152

KALI CONSUMES THE DEMON RAKTABIJA
From a *Devi Mahatmya* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 4th quarter of the 18th century
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 64.371

All the *shaktis*, "female energies" of the greatest of the gods, like the Devi herself, are baffled when confronted with the powerful Raktabija on the field of battle, as there seems to be no way of finishing him off. Through a boon he had earlier gained from the gods, wherever a single drop of his blood falls on the ground another Raktabija springs up. Hence, as soon as the goddess kills one Raktabija, a whole army of them comes roaring to life. Finally the Devi creates from her powers the dark and frightful Kali, with emaciated body, a grinning mouth, and an enormously long tongue which she can flick forward at lightning speed. Delighting in scenes of carnage, Kali extends her great tongue and licks, preventing any of Raktabija's blood from touching the ground. Thus does Raktabija die.

In this sequence from a *Devi Mahatmya* series, the goddess on her lion-mount, ten-armed and energetic, is seen in the center toward the top as her lion leaps forward; the *shaktis*, very carefully delineated, each carrying the emblem of her male counterpart or riding his *vahana*, appear in a group at left: Maheshwari, Narasimhi, Varahi, Aindri, Brahmi, Vaishnavi, and Yami. Raktabija is seen twice, once full of energy and challenge as he blunts the attack of the Devi, and then again lying dead at bottom right. But the central figure in the painting quite clearly is Kali, her dread appearance symbolizing Death and Time. We see the ribcage from a skeleton she tucked under her right arm, the garland of human heads around her neck, and her hypnotically horrifying demeanor. She leans forward hungrily, resting her weight on her hands and a knee and flicking out her wondrous tongue, filling one with strange uneasy thoughts.

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153

BRAHMA AND THE OTHER GODS PAY HOMAGE TO THE GODDESS
Gouache on paper
Pahari; 3rd quarter of the 19th century; from a Basohli workshop
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 1970 (P)

Clearly related to the famous square "Devi" series of an early date, this painting also shows certain departures from it and contains many more details than do most works of this group. The goddess stands, four-armed and dark-complexioned, holding a long sword, a trident, a tabor-drum, and a bowl formed of the top of a skull, to receive homage from the greatest of the gods. Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma scatter flowers at her feet or stand with bowed heads and folded hands. A reference is made to the great exploits of the goddess, for the scene is dominated, near top left, by a heap of severed and mutilated bodies of demons whom she has apparently vanquished. A brief sprinkling of stylized trees toward top and bottom left is another departure from the usual Devi series paintings which show a generally flat and unpeopled ground.

The fierce aspect of the goddess is emphasized by the gory pile of quartered and bleeding corpses of demons, in treatment curiously reminiscent of some passages from the great Hamza series in Mughal painting, in fact, almost certainly the focus of the work as conceived by the painter. Quite naturally, the intent is to establish supremacy of the bloodthirsty and all-conquering goddess, but the painter moves with genuine enthusiasm in and around the mutilated bodies of the demons that represent evil brought to its knees by the powers of good.

Brilliantly colored and drawn with remarkable control, in its style the painting comes very close to the great *Rasamanjari* paintings from this area, many of which are included here. The treatment of the trees, the configuration of the three male deities, the rendering of the strip of sky at the top provide strong indications to this effect.

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154

THE GODDESS DRINKING WINE FROM A CUP
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Basohli workshop
21.7 x 21.6 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. K–42

Archer describes this work as being from a "Tantrik Devi series . . . part of the earliest group of paintings to be associated with Basohli [and] characterized by a certain 'savage intensity.' " It turns out that male deities also figure in the series at times, but the Tantric affiliations of the work are clear. When the Devi is shown drinking liquor, as here, or dancing upon a corpse, we are undoubtedly in the area of a kind of occult worship that is esoteric and difficult to comprehend. The Devi portrayed here is designated as *Shyama*, the Dark One, in a Takri inscription. Richly bejewelled, the ornaments embellished with glistening beetle-wing cases, she stands holding in one hand a cup, which she raises to her lips, and in the other, two lotuses. But she also carries in her left hand what looks like a garland of lotus buds: only when we examine it closely do we realize that it is a garland of human heads, proclaiming the destructive power of this emanation of the goddess. Suddenly, through this detail, a difference sounds: the dark color of the goddess starts acquiring a Tantric connotation.

This series of paintings came to light in 1918 when six works from it were acquired by the Lahore Museum. For many years the series figured prominently in discussions about the origins of Pahari painting, for it was recognized as being early. Interest in it then waned, only to pick up recently when another group turned up, quite unexpectedly, in the U.S. and there was response once again to "its barbaric magnificence and air of wild sophisticated luxury."

Literature

S.N. Gupta, *Catalogue of Paintings in the Central Museum, Lahore*, Calcutta, 1922; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973; F.S. Aijazuddin, *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, London, 1977.

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155

GODDESS AMONG THE FLAMES
Gouache on paper
Pahari; 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mandi workshop
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 413



It is not the gentle (*saumya*) aspect of the goddess that the painter sets out to depict here, but the great energy that she embodies, the fear that she is capable of inspiring, when aroused. She is rendered with large outspread wings, rarely seen in images of major deities in Pahari painting. The feeling of power comes from the stance, and in particular from the magnificent aureole of flames surrounding her and ending with (or proceeding from) a dragon at her feet, stretching his thin, scaly neck and breathing fire. The goddess is four-armed, carrying a book, a sword, a skull-bowl and a rosary—obvious references to the different goddesses whose qualities she incorporates. But the expression on her face as she turns her head skyward, and the nervous energy in her lanky form, clad in a long, thick woolen dress, stand out. An agile tiger runs at the bottom of the painting, as if keeping pace with her, and three birds, sometimes sacrificed at her altar, form a group at bottom left. Her flaming orange dress glowing, she stands etched boldly against the bare dark ground and, eventually, etched in the mind of the devotee or viewer.

The Mandi affiliations of the painting are strong: the facial features with a little reddish shading on the cheeks, the small head, the rendering of the tiger, are all seen in other works of known Mandi origin. But the inventiveness and the power of this work are not easily matched.

The painting bears an inscription, possibly in a late hand, which identifies the goddess as Jalpa or "the flaming-mouthed goddess," but this description by a late owner is possibly based on the flames seen in it. When published earlier, it was described also as Tripurasundari, which is not the aspect of the goddess depicted here.

Literature

R. Prasad et al., *Nehru, A Birthday Book*, Calcutta, 1950; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, No. 17, *s.v.* Mandi.

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156

A YOGINI
Sandstone
11th century; from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
180 cm
Archaeological Museum, Khajuraho, No. 409

From Madhya Pradesh, rich in images of the sixty-four *yoginis*, comes this mutilated but magnificent image of one of the dread aspects of the great goddess. Khajuraho, from where this image comes, fell within a Kaula-Kapalika belt, where occult worship was in great favor and Tantric practices once held powerful sway. This image must have fitted well into the scheme of things. There is indeed a temple of the *yoginis* at Khajuraho but it is now empty of images, unlike the temple at Bheraghat where a whole array of *yoginis* still rule in their awesome majesty.

This *yogini*, embodying the powers of destruction, rides a bird-mount which looks like an owl. Her full-bosomed, firm figure comes quite close to the women worshippers who stand on either side of her on this stele, but there all resemblance ceases. Arms sprouting around her form, hands holding weapons of annihilation, she opens her mouth wide and lowers her eyes in an expression that strikes fear in the mind of the viewer. Much else around her conforms to standard descriptions of steles of this kind: flying *gandharvas* and *vidyadharas* with garlands, the flanking ascetic-looking deities, *makara* and elephant and *vyala* forms, and devout attendant figures seated at the base. But from this usual and predictable setting, the figure of the *yogini* seems to burst forth in all its dread power. It is as if the powerful image and the subsidiary figures are moving in opposite directions, but the eye is riveted again and again to the apparition that occupies the center of this carefully composed work.

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THE BIRTH OF TWILIGHT
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 114
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 238

When myths are told elaborately and with conviction, as they are in the *Bhagavata Purana*, they offer wonderful opportunities for the painters to visualize them. Brahma the Creator is described in the Third Book of the *Purana* as bringing into being all categories of creation, at the bidding of the all-powerful Vishnu. Some beings are pure (*sattvika*) in conception and appearance; others partake of the middling quality (*rajasa*); but the dark aspect of creation (*tamasa*), cannot be left out. Thus Brahma at one point gives birth to *asuras*, dark of nature and aspect, who arise from his thighs. A strange sexual lust seizes them as they spring into being, and they run after Brahma himself. Harassed and at a loss, Brahma seeks refuge in Vishnu and begs for advice. Vishnu asks him to leave his present body and assume another. Its form is that of a young maiden of exceedingly attractive aspect, Sandhya, or twilight. The *asuras*, lustful and impatient, suddenly freeze in their tracks when confronted with this inviting, wondrous being. They discuss her real nature even as they are struck by her unearthly beauty, her golden complexion, her sharp features, her well-formed body, and pleasant aspect. Finally, scarcely believing their luck, they seize Sandhya and make her their own.

While the full meaning of the myth remains elusive, the painter uses the occasion to contrast the clear aspect of the world of the gods that we know with the murky domain of the *asuras*. In this entire series, wherever the demons are envisioned the painter is at his inventive best. Through their fearsome aspects he explores dark recesses of the mind, visually far more riveting than the relatively bland world of the four-headed Brahma and Vishnu the Preserver. In the painting, Sandhya bridges the gap between the two worlds of light and darkness.

Literature

In W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, No. 23 (ii), *s.v.* Basohli, this work is given the slightly misleading title, "Earth is harrassed by demons." An immediately preceding leaf showing Brahma fleeing from the demons is in the Lahore Museum; F.S. Aijazuddin, *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, London, 1977, No. 7(x), *s.v.* Basohli. See No. 114.

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158

THE POWERS OF DARKNESS
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 83
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
21 x 31.5 cm
State Museum, Lucknow, No. 42.20

The Third Book of the *Purana* says that as a part of the negative, dark aspect of the creation brought into being by Brahma from the element of sloth in his own nature, he gave birth to *bhutas* and *pishachas* who sprang forth naked, grinning, and with dishevelled hair. Brahma could not bear to see this creation of his and closed his eyes. It was his yawn that these dark demons took on as their cover. In the same manner, slumber gave rise to other forms when Brahma began exploring the *tamasa* (dark) aspect of his own powers.

This extraordinary work gives visual form to the negative powers of darkness. These awesome, misshapen creatures lurking in the cloud of unknowing are products of a powerful imagination. The painter's range of shapes and sizes, of glances and expressions as these beings slink about, hide and then emerge, look furious, anxious, doubtful, threatening, makes this one of the most engaging folios of this *Bhagavata Purana* series, which is generally rich in such innovations.

When the painting was first published by M.S. Randhawa he cited Book Three, Chapter Twenty, of the *Purana* as its textual source. The passage consists of verses 39–41 which speak of the emergence of slumber and sloth.

Literature

Published in M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting*, New Delhi, 1959; also see No. 83.

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THE EMERGENCE OF VIRABHADRA OF AWESOME APPEARANCE
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 83
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
22 x 32.5 cm
Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Udaipur, No. 1527/18

Passages that speak with enthusiasm of Shiva are not frequent or detailed in a Vaishnava context such as the *Bhagavata Purana*. Yet the episode of Shiva's revenge upon Daksha, his father-in-law, is treated in Book Four of the *Purana* at great length and with a sense of deep involvement. Shiva's wife, incensed by her father's implied insult to her lord by not inviting him to the great fire sacrifice (*yajna*) he was holding, immolates herself in that very fire. When this heart-rending news reaches Shiva, he loses control. Shaking with wrath, the text says, Shiva assumed his fierce (*ugra*) form. Biting his lips in anger, he pulled out one of his locks, which glowed with the color of fire and the dazzle of lightning. Then he threw it with great force upon the earth, laughing that awesome laugh which strikes terror in all the quarters of the universe. From that lock of hair sprang forth a being of enormous proportions, with a thousand arms, reaching far into the sky, dark as the clouds, with three eyes that burned with the scorching heat of the sun, sharp of tooth and stern of gaze. This was Virabhadra, Shiva's destructive power incarnate, whom the god had brought forth to proceed to Daksha's sacrificial altar and unleash vast destruction.

The painter keeps the textual description of the awesome appearance of Virabhadra clearly in mind while creating his own version of that being. In doing this he communicates something of the fearsomeness of this manifestation of Shiva, whom we also see at the left pulling out a lock of his hair in the presence of Narada, the celestial sage.

Literature
See No. 83.

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160

BHAIRAVA: SHIVA'S ASPECT OF FEAR
Sandstone
11th century; from Modi-Mandasor, Madhya Pradesh
136 x 65 cm
Central Museum, Indore, No. 1/53-1617

Since death appears to be a finality only in human terms, in the calculations of the gods it even has a playful, careless aspect. When Shiva takes the form of Bhairava, with the decapitated head of Brahma clinging to his hand, sin and suffering come to attach to him. But this, too, is part of that great *lila* that encompasses life and death and the essence of time itself. As the god roams the earth, clad in a necklace of skulls and carrying a begging bowl, a dread terror attaches to his form. Shiva is also rendered as the boyish figure begging alms from door to door (*bhikshatana*), entirely nude but for a little jewelry that clings to his form, especially a ring or a bell that jingles as he moves and warns others that a great sinner approaches.

From this curious and transcendental melange of divinity and sin, of life and death, spring images of the kind that we have here. Magnificently conceived as a boyish figure with multiple arms most of them now broken, this Mahabhairava, iconographically rather unusual, interprets this coming-together of opposites in the myth of Shiva. Very little of the arms is visible but the matted locks fanning out behind the head, the large earrings, the pendant chains ending in small bells, the long hanging garland of skulls, and the anklets on the feet wearing wooden clogs, leave little doubt about the identification of the figure. The sculptor softens the impact of horror by a smile on the face and a swaying rhythm in the body. But there is no mistaking the dread impact of this form of Shiva's. A quiet power emanates from the figure, for all its boyish look and its rhythmic grace. It is as if death comes assuming a boyish disguise.

Literature

Journal of Indian Museums, XI, 1955; R.S. Garg, *Shaiva Pratimayen*, Bhopal, 1982.

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161

CHAMUNDA: THE GODDESS AS ANNIHILATOR
Sandstone
10th century; from Hinglajgarh, Madhya Pradesh
87 x 54 x 22 cm
Central Museum, Indore, No. 2 (195)



Diverse textual sources describe this dread goddess. They differ in detail: in the number of her arms, the objects she carries, or the mount she favors. But in sum, she emerges as a powerful vision of death and destruction. As the *Devi Mahatmya* says, Chamunda is Kali, the Dark One. When on the field of battle, the goddess Durga is faced with the demon Raktabija, who is virtually indestructible. Even the *matrikas* are unable to stem his devastation, for whenever he is injured, from each drop of his blood springs up another equally powerful demon. The goddess asks Chamunda to finish Raktabija off as she has finished off Chanda and Munda. At this command, she opens her mouth wide, sticking out an extraordinarily long tongue with which she licks every drop of blood falling from the demon's body, thus rendering him powerless. Having done this, "she swallowed him and all the countless others born of his blood, relishing the taste in her mouth and hungering for more."

Such verbal descriptions lead the sculptor to pack her form with all conceivable signs of death. To her tusks cling pieces of the entrails she has been feeding upon; snakes and scorpions adorn her body instead of the usual ornaments and jewelry; she holds decapitated heads, and wears in her ears and around her body garlands of human bodies and skulls. Her body is wasted thin, her own skeletal form rattles as she moves, and her shrivelled breasts dangle over her sunken belly.

This devourer of life, of Time itself, is magnificently conceived with many of the associations the texts speak of. The deadly insects and reptiles that curl around her form and crawl up her stomach fit perfectly with the conception of the goddess as destroyer. The open mouth, into the darkness of which whole hordes can disappear "like snakes into their pits," the bulging, swollen eyes, the tilt of the head, and the swaying of the body as she dances in joy at the devastation she causes, all come together with telling, awesome power in this image.

Literature

R.S. Garg, *Shakta Pratimayen*, Bhopal, 1980; Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.*, Washington, D.C., 1985, No. 47.

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A MAN EATING HEADS OF ANIMALS
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 4th quarter of the 18th century; from a Jodhpur workshop
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 8615

This bizarre subject recurs with surprising frequency in the painting of Rajasthan. An unusually tall bearded man, often represented as a Muslim, is shown ravenously eating raw heads of animals, mostly goats. The intention does not seem to be humorous; the focus is on his inhuman appetite and utter lack of discretion about what he consumes. Often the suggestion is that he comes from a lowly profession. This image suggests a cart-driver or a groom, indicated by the whip tucked into the ample folds of his turban and the curious object he carries around his neck, very likely a part of a harness. His long beard establishes him as a Muslim. But the point of greatest interest to the painter is the man's grisly appetite. He holds in his right hand the head of a ram that seems to have been freshly supplied by a butcher, but other things follow: the heads of a buffalo and a camel, lying next to him in a large metallic dish, await his attention. Large quantities of drink also seem to be available. Shoeless, the figure sits down to his grotesquely plenteous meal.

This figure appears to be of no special significance and is unrelated to any tale or sequence. It is as if, having come to know a person with such strange and repulsive proclivities, the painter decides to leave a record, however unpleasant. The coarseness of the act and of the man's nature is consciously mirrored in the artist's rendering. The lines are rough; emphasis is on details like the bristly hair of the ears, the wobbly teeth visible in the open mouth, and the body hair on his arms and hands.

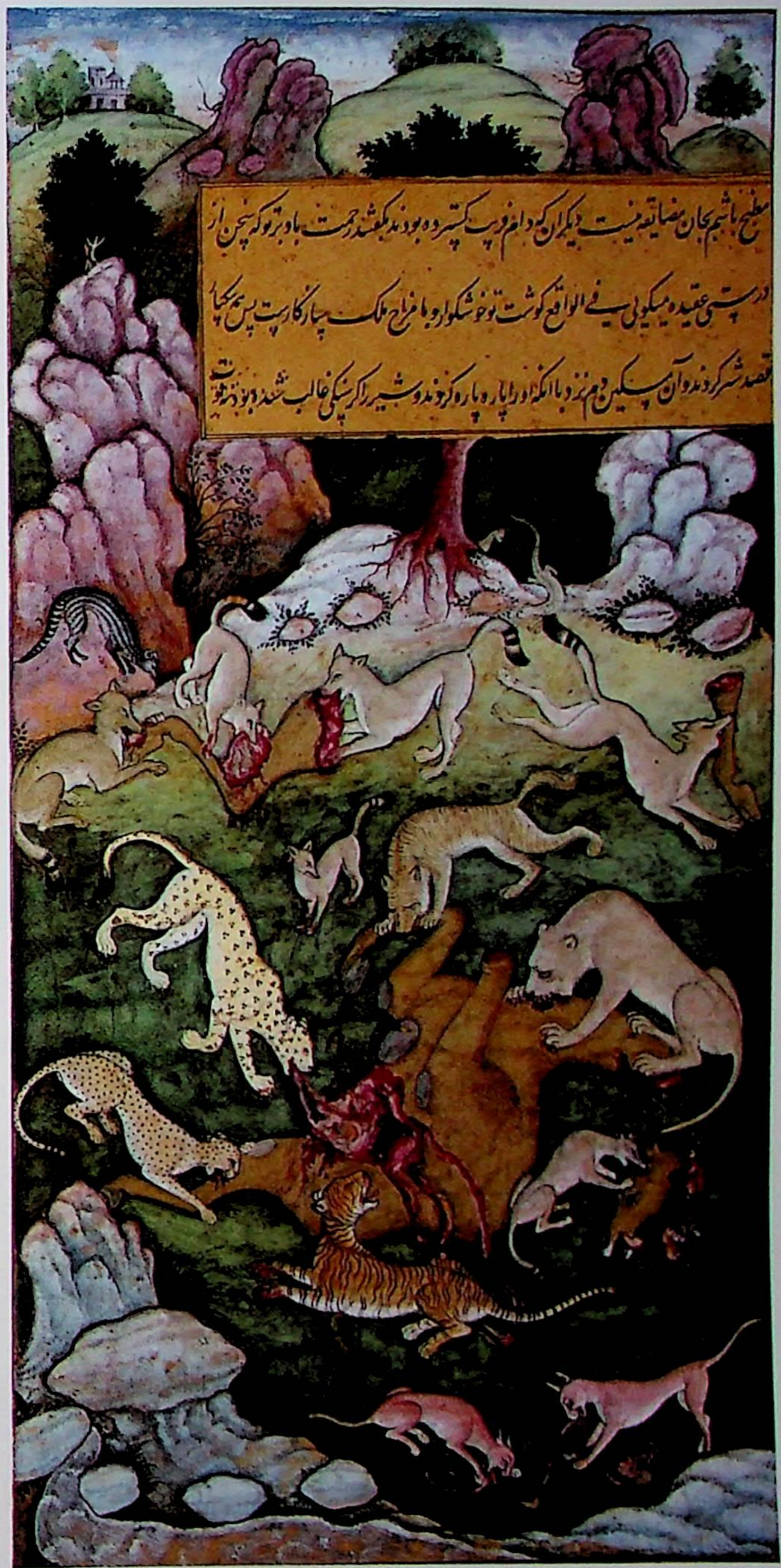
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A CARCASS EATEN BY ANIMALS
From an *Anvar-i-Suhaili* manuscript
Gouache on paper
Mughal, 2nd half of the 16th century
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 9069.12

The carcass of a dead camel is being consumed by denizens of the forest. The episode figures clearly in the convoluted but instructive fables collected in the *Anvar-i-Suhail* (The Lights of Canopus). Once having introduced the gory subject, the painter seems to have become remarkably involved. He shows not only the usual scavengers, but in a superb rendering he also brings together a whole range of carnivores crowding around the dead carcass. Thus, as a jackal bites into the camel's severed head, now lying at a slight distance from the body, a lion digs his claws firmly into the neck, a spotted panther fastens upon one leg and a striped tiger another. A leopard seizes the exposed entrails, while a small group of jackals treats themselves to a leg. Two other animals with long sharp ears and stiff tails, possibly hyenas, also pull at entrails, and a whole host of other animals and reptiles seem to gather to watch with horrified fascination the action in the middle of the picture.

The work is evidently the hand of a great master who revels in studies of animals in action and displays a virtuoso skill in drawing them. The impression the scene leaves is undisputably one of revulsion. Not often does even the Mughal painter, so interested in recording with an unblinking eye what he sees around himself, come to render such a subject in such graphic and surprising detail.



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164

ALAKSHAMI
Fragment of a Chamunda image
Sandstone
9th century; from Madhya Pradesh, probably Gurgi
79 x 32 x 34 cm
State Museum, Bhopal, No. 817

Even from this fragment, one can visualize the piece that must have belonged to this image of Chamunda. All we see now is one arm, a severed head in its hand, toward the top right: the rest of this piece consists of *pretas* and goblins, spirits hungering for blood, who invariably follow the goddess as she moves, for they are always hopeful of being fed by the devastation she causes. These dreadful forms, emaciated and skeletal, twist and turn, reaching with hungry mouths for morsels that might fall their way, ready to lick any blood that might fall. There is a frenetic, feverish air about them as they gleefully go about their tasks, holding bowls up and cupping their hands to their mouths. The convulsions of these figures are those of joy, for the convulsions of those who are killed and rent asunder by the goddess's weapons are no concern of theirs. In this fragment, in contrast with these hideous and repulsive forms, even the severed head the goddess holds appears healthy and peaceful. Perhaps that effect is explained by another fact: dying at the hands of the goddess is release.

This figure is very likely the same one described by S.K. Dikshit in his *Guide to the Dhubela Museum*. He identified the goddess through her hand as "Alakshami, who is also known as Bhutamata or Pretamata," and is related somewhere to Nirriti of the Vedas.

Literature

S.K. Dikshit, *A Guide to the State Museum, Dhubela*, Nowgong, 1957; Pramod Chandra, *The Sculptures of India 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.*, Washington, D.C., 1985, No. 52.

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165

KALI, THE DARK ONE, ON THE BATTLEFIELD
From the same *Devi Mahatmya* series as No. 158
Gouache on paper
Pahari, datable to 1781; from a Guler workshop
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. E. 175

In her relentless struggle against the demon hordes, the goddess at one point faces the fierce and powerful Chanda and Munda. When they approach her golden chamber atop a mountain summit, they find her seated in tranquility, a gentle smile playing upon her lips. Believing she will be easy prey, they suddenly rush forward to capture her. Seeing this, she flies into a rage, her face suddenly becoming dark and her eyebrows rising in an angry arch. Then, from this benign aspect, Kali springs forth, hideous of body but all-conquering on the field of battle. She is an awesome apparition, dark of complexion, emaciated, with pendulous breasts, and an enormous mouth; in its cavernous depths she could swallow whole armies. Her tongue lolling, eyes bloodshot, she utters a terrifying cry and falls upon the demons and their phalanx of chariots, horses, and footmen. Swinging her death-dealing noose and sword, her tiger-skin skirt and garland of human heads swaying with each movement, as the text says, she unleashes great destruction upon the enemy, cutting and slashing, and making crunching sounds as she chews them with sharp teeth. When Chanda and Munda hurl a rain of flaming discuses upon her, she simply opens her mouth; these flying weapons disappear inside "like countless suns into the belly of dark, raging clouds."

Such is the vision of the Pahari painter. The Kali paintings within the same series fill several leaves, each more powerful than the next. In this leaf we see, in the top left corner, Kali taking back to the goddess the decapitated heads of Chanda and Munda, which led to her being designated later as "Chamunda." Evidence of the havoc she has wrought on the battlefield lies all around.

Paintings from this series originally numbered fifty-seven, something that is to be noticed also in other Pahari sets. A large group of these is in the Lahore Museum.

Literature

V.S. Agrawala, *Devi Mahatmya: Glorification of the Great Goddess*, Varanasi, 1961; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Guler; F.S. Aijazuddin, *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, London, 1977, *s.v.* Guler, Nos. 41 (i) to (xxxiv).

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THE GODDESS IN HER DARK ASPECT
Gouache on linen
Mughal, 1st quarter of the 17th century
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. K–2

In her tamasic aspect, the Devi is essentially the power of destruction (*samhara shakti*). When intent upon destruction, nothing can withstand her, neither god nor demon, time nor space. Angry and terrible, she destroys and devours. The picture of her annihilating power here is complete. Her garment is the severed heads of the countless demons she has slain; in one hand she carries her food, meat and bones that are pecked at by a crow; her ear ornaments are half-burnt corpses, and among her weapons she carries a skeleton as a dread staff. Eight-armed, naked and shrivelled, with a hideous expression, grinning and with dishevelled hair, she stands amid the scene of her destruction, her legs disposed as if about to break into a slow-cadenced dance. All around her are carrion birds and scavenging animals, crows, jackals, dogs, as blood spurts from dismembered bodies and the sound of crunching bones is heard. Even in her terrible aspect, however, she remains the Mother of the Universe:

> who has created this world of the real and the unreal and who by her own energy, with its three modes, protects it, destroys it, and plays.

The Devi in this aspect is an unlikely subject for Mughal painting, and yet this powerful, subtly colored work is clearly Mughal in affiliation. In other paintings of the same series, one sees more figures and some architecture, but even here the treatment of the rocks in the background and of the animals strongly suggests a Mughal connection. The work might have been done for a Hindu devotee by a Mughal-trained artist. The painting is on linen, not on paper.

Literature

Published in S.N. Gupta, *Catalogue of Paintings in the Central Museum, Lahore*, Calcutta, 1922, pl. IX; also see Pramod Chandra, "Ustad Salivahana and the Development of Popular Mughal Art," *Lalit Kala*, No. 8, 1960, fig. 33.

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167

DEMONIC HEAD
Terracotta
1st–2nd century
8 cm
Patna Museum, Patna, No. 8691

Demonic powers hold a strange fascination for the sculptor of early India, especially at the folk level, possibly because he lived with images of this kind in his mind, pervasive as they were in the thought and literature of the times. This head of a demon, with bulging eyes, large irregular nostrils, protruding teeth, and a long hanging tongue, springs from the same level of the subconscious that has yielded so much brilliant work of its kind. Here the sculptor completes this image of fear and disgust by imparting to the face other grotesque features—enormous, pendulous ears almost as long as the head itself, angry eyebrows stretching across the forehead, parallel striated lines cutting diagonally across the cheeks, and unkempt hair that stays rather close to the skull. There is a curious and deliberate attempt to make this gruesome face appear less menacing by turning it into some kind of a rattle, for the head makes a noise when shaken, as if to assimilate this unpleasant face with the total range of images carried about in the head, and thereby exorcises a fear that must have lurked within its maker.

Literature

P.L. Gupta, *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*, Patna, 1965, p. 238.

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168

THE YOGINI BHA-NAVA
Sandstone
11th century, from Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh
80 x 50 x 22 cm
State Museum, Dhubela, No. 730

When the mystic and the occult meet in the worship of the goddess, one moves into the area of emanations of the Devi herself. Not everything is understood with clarity where Tantric and occult worship are concerned; at any rate something decidedly eludes the "outsiders." The cult of *yoginis*, thus, is only imperfectly comprehended by anyone not an active participant in its esoteric rituals. However, some of the most remarkable medieval images, certainly those from Madhyadesha or middle India, are those of *yoginis*. By tradition there are sixty-four of them, and on the celebrated roofless temples of Bheraghat in Madhya Pradesh and Hirapur in Orissa, to name only two sites, images of these *yoginis* stand in serried order. The lists of their names do not tally, and even when goddesses of the same name are sculpted, the vehicles, arms, and weapons that characterize them vary. But they are at once seen as powerful deities symbolizing the various destructive aspects of the goddess, even though they betray no emotions over acts that in other contexts would be described as gruesome and sanguine. Thus the goddess makes light of the fact that they hold decapitated heads in their hands or sit on corpses surrounded by both devotees and carcass-eating animals. Such is their nature and their function, despite the fact that they are also conceived as "beautiful-bodied women with high rounded breasts, slender waist and broad hips."

The figure of the *yogini* whom we see here, identified through a contemporary inscription on the pedestal as Bha-Nava, is unfortunately so seriously damaged that we cannot form a fair estimate of the range of weapons (*ayudhas*) she carried, but two objects can easily be identified: a shield and a decapitated head, which she holds by its tuft of hair. A host of attendant and subsidiary figures is carved on the stele above and at the sides, some exhibiting the same hunger as the *yogini*, "the Lustrous One," herself. One of them is chewing a severed hand, while others hold human skulls and brandish knives. The figure that really stands out and interprets the true nature of her destructive powers is the composite lionlike animal which crouches under her and throws its head back with a fierce snarl, lifting its front leg ominously. Contrasted with all this is the severe, almost untouched expression on the face of the *yogini;* and there is unquestionable delicacy in the manner with which she rests her right foot lightly on a lotus springing up from the terrain below. Bha-Nava, the "Yogini Bha with a variation," does not commonly occur in the list of sixty-four *yoginis*, but perhaps she partakes of the qualities of others like Bha, Prabha, Vibha and Kanti, all denoting the shining aspects of Durga.

The sculpture is documented as having come from Shahdol, which has yielded some splendid works, but impressive as it is, it does not attain the high quality of the life-size Bhairava, also from Shahdol, seen here (No. 150).

Literature

S.K. Dikshit, *A Guide to the State Museum, Dhubela*, Nowgong, 1957; Vidya Dehejia, "The Yogini Temples of India," *Art International*, XXV: 3–4, 1982, figs. 8-9, pp. 6–28.

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ADBHUTA: THE MARVELOUS SENTIMENT

अद्भुतरस

ADBHUTA HAS ITS basis in *vismaya*, the enduring emotional state of astonishment. The determinants spoken of as appropriate to this mood are things such as "sight of heavenly beings or events, attainment of desired objects, entry into a superior mansion, temple, audience hall, and seven-storied palace, and [seeing] illusory and magical acts." Its consequents, as defined by Bharata, include: "... wide opening of eyes, looking with fixed gaze, horripilation, tears [of joy], perspiration, joy, uttering words of approbation, making gifts, crying incessantly, 'ha, ha, ha,' waving the end of *dhoti* or *sari*, and movements of fingers and the like." The complementary emotional states that feed into the mood are "weeping, paralysis, perspiration, choking voice, horripilation, agitation, hurry, inactivity, death and the like."

In a further elaboration, Bharata states that the marvelous sentiment "arises from words, character, deeds, and personal beauty." It is said to be of two kinds, "celestial and joyous." Of these, the celestial is due to seeing heavenly sights, and the joyous due to joyful happenings. When a character moves his head to and fro on the stage, uttering the words "well done, well done," he is obviously expressing *vismaya*, the determinants of which also include "illusion, magic, extraordinary feats of men, great excellence in painting, art, works in parchment and the like."

An often cited example of the Adbhuta *rasa* in literature is Lakshmana's utterance in the *Viracharita* of Bhavabhuti:

> The sound of the clang raised by the breaking of the bow-staff of the Moon-crested Shiva, which [bow] had got into his [Rama's] arms—or literally arm-staffs—as a drum for proclaiming the boy-play of my elder brother—reverberating with its force condensed in the belly of the receptacle of Brahma's egg—our universe—the halves of which violently shaken, have collapsed as a box so that the sound can't get out—ha!—how!—does it not even yet subside?

The passage is not easy to understand, for it contains elaborate references and allusions, but it does communicate the feeling of *vismaya*, of strange and marvelous things happening. The entering of Sita in the fire, described with such beauty and feeling in the *Ramayana*, is again cited as a prominent example of Adbhuta *rasa* in literature. The manner in which she sits in the lap of Agni, the fire-god, and her emerging completely unscathed from the ordeal, all give rise to wondrous reactions and feelings on the part of the other characters present at this touching moment.

Although not all writers accept Adbhuta in the canon of *rasa,* in at least one authorative opinion, that of Narayana (the great-grandfather of Vishwanatha), Adbhuta is really the only *rasa*. Narayana says everything else proceeds from it and merges into it. This view serves to emphasize the great importance of Adbhuta as a *rasa*. Perhaps when a distinction is made between Adbhuta *tattva* (element of wonder) and Adbhuta *rasa* (experience of wonder), the issues become clearer. Painting and sculpture pay elaborate attention to it; some very impressive works have survived. The great and wondrous deeds of the gods, the many miracles spoken of in the myths, superhuman feats of heroes, magical sights described in the texts, are interpreted and made to feed and enhance the mood: the gestures of astonishment, the emphasis on an act or its perception, the abbreviation and ordering of properties in a situation, subtle indications of facial expression, are all drawn upon with sensitivity.

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NATARAJA: LORD OF DANCE
Bronze
10th–11th century; Tamil Nadu
98 x 83 x 27 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 56. 2/1

The dance of Shiva is no ordinary dance, as any devotee knows, but one emblematic of the whole activity of God, which brings the cosmos into existence and then snuffs it out. In it are represented the fivefold activities of creation: sustenance, destruction, veiling and, in the final analysis, salvation, grace. An eloquent hymn says:

> O Lord, thy sacred drum has made and ordered the heavens and earth and other worlds of innumerable souls. Thy lifted hand protects both the conscious and unconscious order of thy creation. All these worlds are transformed by Thy hand bearing fire. Thy sacred foot, planted on the ground, gives an abode to the tired soul struggling in the toils of causality. It is Thy lifted foot that grants eternal bliss to those who approach Thee. These five actions are indeed Thy handiwork.

Shiva performs many different kinds of dances, some graceful and easy-paced, some frenetic and angry; some are aimed at communicating to his disciples the essence of movement, which is only another name for godly activity.

This dance of bliss, so much sung about in the poetic literature of early India and so often visualized by the great sculptors of the South, has about it the quality of holding things together and scattering them at the same time. When the texts say that Shiva drops a veil, a curtain of illusion, over everything and then lifts it as an act of grace, they refer to the inscrutability of his activity. But a brief glimpse is allowed the devotee in images of this order. Not every sculptor understood in all its subtlety the doctrine and the belief that was condensed in this magnificent conception of the Nataraja, the dancing lord, but those that did come very close to placing within the reach of the viewer, the devotee, a moving, elevating experience. In images that seem to expand and contract, that stay still one moment and break into spirited movement in the next, they catch something of the great mystery of creation and dissolution.

The four-armed figure is familiar: the movement of the legs and feet, the spreading, matted hair like a halo at the back of the head, the drum, the boon-granting hand, the flame of fire, the lifted foot, the demon of ignorance being crushed, the aureole of flames around the figure, all resting on an "untouched" lotus at the bottom, and all concentrated in that all-knowing quiet expression of the face. The details of ornamentation, the character of the circle of fire, the adornment of the body, vary as the skill of the craftsman, but when things come together as in this superb image, the dance becomes an act of revelation, a concentrated rendering of "all the rhythms that are in the cosmos."

Literature

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva*, New York, 1918; C. Sivaramamurti, *The Nataraja in Indian Art, Thought, and Literature,* New Delhi, 1974; R. Nagaswamy, *Masterpieces of Early South Indian Bronzes*, New Delhi, 1982; *Ancient Sculptures of India*, 1984, No. 58.

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170

GARUDA AND SNAKES IN COMBAT
From the same *Shiva Purana* series as No. 192
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Kangra workshop
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 527

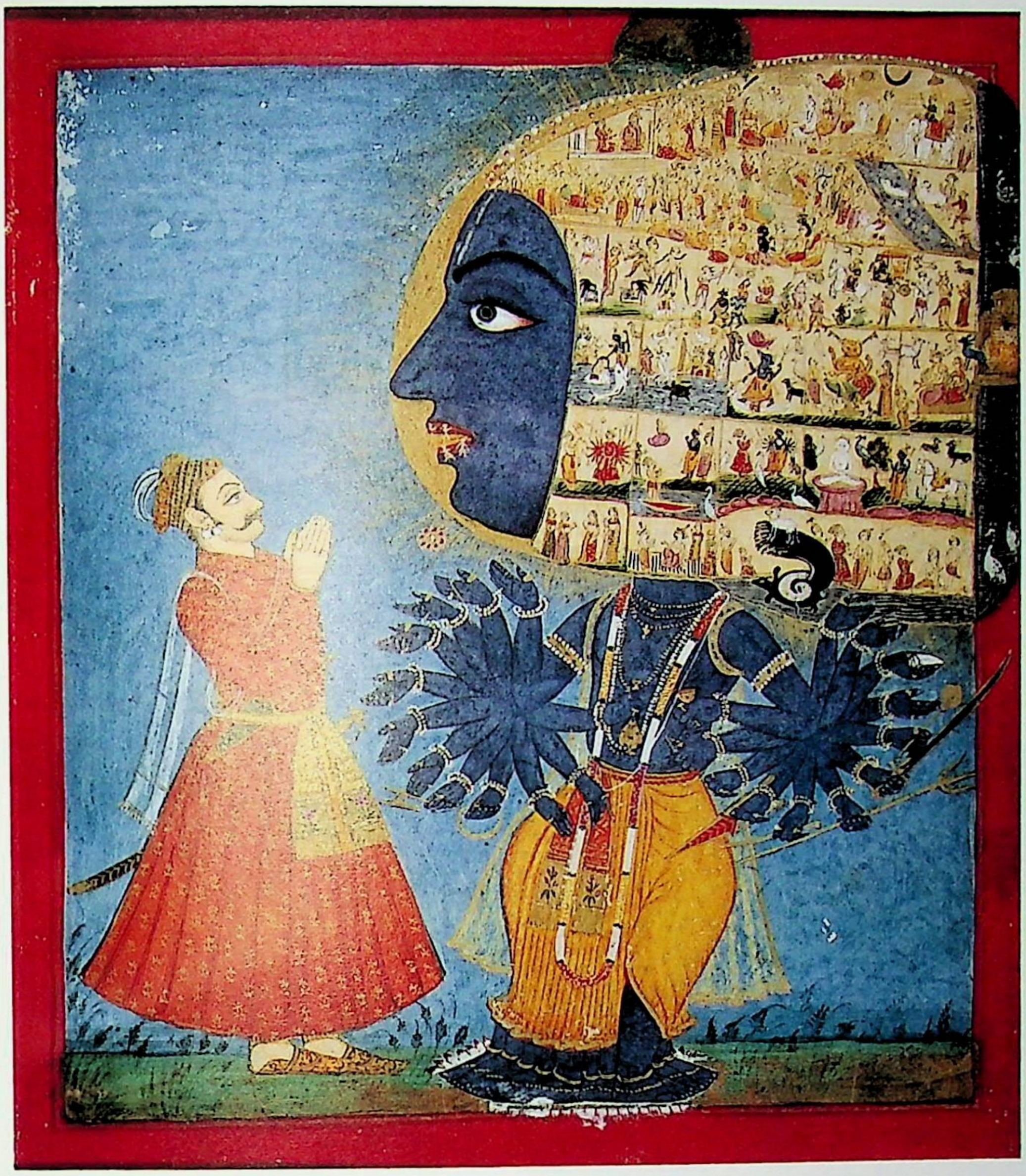
There are times when the Pahari painter, his imagination fired by some little detail in a narrative, gives himself free rein. Opportunities for doing this are offered by a text such as the *Shiva Purana*, which describes at great length the battle, fierce and ongoing, between the gods and demons. Since both are endowed with the power to create their own particular *maya*, a kind of cosmic illusion, the encounters between them take on bizarre aspects at times. When the demon generals let loose countless serpents upon the gods, the gods press into service Garuda, the sun-bird (*vahana*) of Vishnu and natural enemy of snakes: a flight of Garudas in turn pounces upon the snakes. Here we find them making short work of the serpents, maiming and killing them with sharp, powerful beaks. The gods look on: Vishnu on Garuda, Indra on his white elephant Airavata; Surya in his horse-drawn chariot, and so on; so do the demons who occupy the top left part of the painting.

Other things are happening in this leaf. In another sanguine combat, again between the magical, illusory powers of the two antagonists, we find the herds of elephants owned by the demons taken on by a pride of tigers and leopards, which emerge from the side of the gods' phalanx. Also, a powerful mace, hurled into the air, perhaps by Vishnu, breaks in two a mountain segment that demons have thrown at them in order to crush them. While this happens, arrows of different descriptions whiz past the earthbound animals.

When a powerful demon is spoken of in the Puranic texts, he is often described as an especially *mayavin asura*, wielding great powers or creating illusions. This is what the painter of this series, a member of the Purkhu family of Samloti, also believes Taraka, enemy of the gods, to be. It might be of interest to mention that W.G. Archer sees the work as coming from Garhwal.

Literature
See No. 192.

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171

VISHWARUPA: THE COSMIC FORM OF VISHNU
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from a Bikaner workshop
21 x 18.2 cm
Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad, No. 76.202

To the Indian painter and sculptor, rendering Vishwarupa, the cosmic form of Vishnu, has posed a challenge across the centuries. The idea is strong and dominant, its expressions in literary and philosophical texts eloquent; but to capture its essence in visual terms is not the easiest of tasks. All the same the grandeur of the theme, the immanent, absolute, all-pervasive form of godhead, has stimulated some great work in the visual arts. In this context, the painters frequently take their inspiration from those incandescent, wonderfully eloquent passages in the *Bhagavad Gita* in which Krishna reveals to Arjuna his cosmic form. To the many doubts of the great Pandava hero, Krishna provides a variety of answers and, in the course of his "song," in words that contain "both metaphysics and ethics . . . the science of reality and the art of union with reality," Krishna speaks of himself as the Supreme Spirit. Humbly begging Krishna to reveal to him this divine aspect, Arjuna is granted a vision. "Behold now," Krishna says, "the entire universe with everything moving and not moving here, standing together in my body." Arjuna sees that majestic vision and is shaken, but then speaks of it in ecstatic words:

> If there should be in the sky,
> a thousand suns risen all at once
> such splendor would be of the splendor of Thy great Being;
> . . . I see Thee everywhere, infinite in form;
> not the end nor the middle nor yet the beginning of Thee.
> I see, O Lord of all, whose form is the Universe
> Crowned, armed with a club and bearing a discus,
> a mass of splendor, shining on all sides,
> with the immeasurable radiance of the sun and blazing fire. . . .

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It is a vision of this kind that is described in verse after verse in a section of the great text, leading us to glimpse the primal spirit that is Vishnu.

As in this painting, the painters frequently showed the cosmic form of Vishnu with the figure of Arjuna standing at his feet, speechless with amazement and humble beyond words. The noble standing at the left is possibly modeled after a person within the experience of the painter, perhaps his own patron. But there seems to be little doubt that he also represents Arjuna in the act of paying homage to that extraordinary vision.

In a departure from the usual renderings that show this cosmic form frontally, the painter here chooses to combine two points of view, the body shown slightly turned toward the right but the gigantic head in true profile, for this gives him the opportunity of packing rows of figures and episodes in the space behind the head. There, as multitudes of humanity are being sucked in with the breath of the Supreme Being, we find in the little panels hints of many dimensions of Vishnu. Predictably, his ten incarnations are shown in one register, but there are also several other vignettes: the heavens and the nether worlds; the very bowels of earth, where the earth, shown as a cow, rests on the myriad hoods of Shesha who rests, in turn, upon a tortoise, perhaps Vishnu in his second incarnation. In these tiny figures, the painter seeks to bring in events and associations of all kinds to communicate an idea of the illimitable power of the Lord of the Universe. An effulgence of light surrounds the massive head, which combines in itself the aspects of the sun and the moon. The body is rendered as one torso with multiple legs and arms, the hands shown carrying diverse weapons.

Not everything in the painting can be taken in immediately, but a sense of amazement lingers in the mind. It is not the most eloquent of the works addressed to this theme, but it is certainly innovative. Even though the painting comes from a Rajasthani center, there seems to be a suggestion in its details of the influence of Kashmiri work, for instance, in the manner in which the multiple arms are disposed, issuing from the elbow, a characteristically Kashmiri device.

172

MANIFESTATIONS OF VISHNU: THE AUREOLE FROM DEVSAR
Bronze
9th century; from Devsar, Kashmir
190 x 128 x 10 cm
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 2661.22

It is unusual that only a frame from which the principal image is missing should draw so much attention and elicit so much admiration. This frame, "technically unsurpassed in the history of Kashmiri bronzes," "a work of bold and rich imagination," was recovered from an excavation in 1930 from Devsar in the Anantnag district of Kashmir, and for nearly forty years it has remained in the forefront of discussion on the art, especially the art of bronze casting, of northern India.

It is not even certain what the principal image for this frame might have been; Buddha, represented as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, has been suggested. The possibility that a proper Vishnu image once occupied the empty space cannot be ruled out. But there is little argument about the Vaishnava affiliations of the ensemble, for all around the central figure is a great and varied sprouting of forms connected in one manner or the other with Vishnu. Along the edge of the elliptical frame runs a flame design that rises in splendid curves from bottom to top, culminating in a finial which frames the standing seven or nine-headed image of Vishnu that may once have occupied the center. Along the edge, again following the contour of the frame, are a large number of figures placed within more or less circular hollows formed by a lotus vine which curls and spirals all the way up from the bottom, leaves intertwining, stalk shooting upward and sideways, tendrils reaching out in different directions. It is not simply the elegance and the astounding technical mastery with which all this is achieved—the entire frame is made in one piece—it is also the spirited rendering of the forms that lends it character.

It is useful to go over the scheme of the frame, as Goetz and lately J.L. Bhan have done, to try to understand the artist's conception of this work. But it is the passion with which the work is concerned and has been executed that leaves a lasting impression. Whether it is the rendering of the Hayagriva or horse-necked form of Vishnu, or Vishnu as Varaha or Narasimha, the forms burst with an inner vitality. When the sculptor wishes to communicate the placidity of a figure, as in the case of Vishnu lying on the serpent Shesha or seated in meditation, he creates a calming, serene effect. But where energy becomes the essence of Vishnu, as when Narasimha subdues the demon Hiranyakashipu, the sheer impetuous force of his roaring form, eyes bulging, legs spread out, a fleshy paw held up tensed, one arm pulling the demon's hair, the artist seems to come into his own. So much is happening all around, so many references

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are made, so many myths explored, that the eye travels almost frantically from one part to another. If the intention of the sculptor was to recreate the glory of Vishnu in his many forms, moods, and roles, presenting the epiphany of the great god and filling the viewer or the devotee with wonder, he succeeds even in the absence of the principal image.

Literature

H. Goetz, "A Masterpiece of Medieval Kashmir Metal Art: King Sankaravarma's Frame for an Image of Buddha Avatara in the Srinagar Museum," *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Letters*, 19, 1953; P. Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir*, Grax, 1975; J.L. Bhan, "Manifestations of Vishnu: A Critical Study of the Ninth Century Prabhavali from Devsar, Kashmir," Baroda, 1983 (unpublished conference paper); Pramod Chandra, *The Sculptures of India 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.*, Washington D.C., 1985, No. 80.





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SHARABHA, SUBDUER OF NARASIMHA
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 1st quarter of the 19th century
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 3833

The episode of the killing of the demon king Hiranyakashipu by Vishnu in his Narasimha (man-lion) incarnation takes a curious, sectarian turn, as told in Shaiva texts. Powerful beyond description, Narasimha tears open the belly of the demon, but his rage, once aroused, attains such proportions that the blood he has shed "goes so much to his head" he loses all control and becomes bent upon widespread destruction. The three worlds tremble at the wrath of Narasimha and the gods themselves gather to appease him, begging him to return to his normal self now that the evil demon-king has been destroyed. But nothing avails. At this, Shiva, with his divine powers, creates a fabulous being, Sharabha, infinitely mightier than Narasimha, whose mere emergence again sends tremors of fear through the three worlds. Being an emanation of Shiva himself, he contains all time and space, as well as the powers of the gods and demons alike. It is only this fabulous creature, the texts say, who finally succeeds in bringing Narasimha under control.

Here we see Sharabha, his divinity established through the nimbus behind his head and the crescent moon, emblem of Shiva, on his forehead, as a composite creature, part bird, part animal. In his great talons around which serpents curl, he seizes whole elephants as he flies; his feathered tail sweeps the very horizons; serpents adorn his entire body as ornaments, and within his form we see deities of all kinds: the goddesses Saraswati, Lakshmi, and Durga, and Shiva and his two other emanations, Bhairava and Virabhadra, looking fierce and resolute. Sharabha stares into space, his tongue sticking out of his great, beaked mouth, as if pausing for a moment before swinging into terror-striking action again.

Representations of Sharabha are uncommon in painting. An unusual picture of the subject from the Pahari area, formerly in the Bickford collection, is now in the Rietberg Museum, Zurich.

Literature

Stanislaw Czuma, *Indian Art from the George P. Bickford Collection*, Cleveland, 1975, No. 120.

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174

THE PRACHETAS DO PENANCE UNDER WATER
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 83.
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
22 x 32.5 cm
Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Udaipur, No. 1527/5

References to extraordinary penance and self-mortification abound in tales from Hindu mythology. An episode in Book Four of the *Bhagavata Purana* relates the penance performed by the ten Prachetas, sons of king Prachinbarhi. Urged by their father to marry and beget children, the Prachetas, devotees of Vishnu, wish first to purify themselves and gain the god's blessing. Being born of Shatadruti, daughter of the ocean, they first enter the waters of the ocean and stand below its surface, meditating upon Vishnu "for ten thousand years," the text asserts. But before they do this, they chance to meet Rudra (Shiva by another name), who also urges them to chant a hymn later called *Rudragita*, and sing praises of Vishnu. Eventually, pleased by their consistency and devotion, Vishnu reveals himself to them and blesses them. Following this, the Prachetas clear the earth of forests that have taken up all space, and each takes a wife, as earlier commanded by their father. Of one of these matches is born, among others, Daksha, who was later to become one of the powerful Prajapatis.

The treatment of the water here is quite different from that seen in the Varaha sequence of paintings from this very series. Here, water covers the forms of the Prachetas completely, but the effect of their shimmering outlines creates a sense of great mystery, of forms appearing and disappearing. And even though ten forms engaged in the same activity are rendered, the painter succeeds in breaking potential monotony through very skilled variations in such details as their stances and the color of the *dhotis* they wear.

Literature
See No. 83.

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175

A NAGA YOUTH EMERGING FROM THE JAWS OF A MAKARA
Red sandstone
2nd century; from Sonkh, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
30 x 80 cm
Government Museum, Mathura, No. SO IV37

The fascination that strange and mythical animals held for the Indian artist is evident from very early times. Of these, the *makara*, monster of the deep and later the mount of the goddess Ganga, remains a great favorite. In monument after monument, it occupies the ends of elaborate friezes or sits curled up on lintels. With wide-open jaws with powerful tongues, scaly bodies, long tendril-like antennae coming out of its powerful nostrils, the whole form is compacted or elongated depending upon the space available, and its spirals and convolutions are treated with remarkable flair. There is always an element of mystery or inexplicability about the figure; often one cannot make out if the figures and objects that extend from it are emerging from its mouth or are being swallowed.

This fragment was unearthed in the course of the relatively recent excavations at Sonkh. It constitutes the left part of the bottom lintel of a gate which evidently served an apsidal temple that once stood at the site. The temple seems to have had strong associations with the Nagas, "serpent people," for they figure prominently in its decorative scheme. The young male who seems to be emerging from the open mouth of this *makara*, hand in the air, scarf fluttering, loincloth slightly displaced, is clearly also a Naga, for a trace of his snake hood is still visible behind his head. But the reading is ambiguous—the Naga youth may well be on the point of disappearing within the powerful jaws of the fabulous beast.

Literature

H. Haertel, "Some Results of the Excavations at Sonkh," *German Scholars on India*, II, Bombay, 1976, fig. 43.

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176

AN ASCETIC RAISING HIS HAND

Terracotta
5th century; from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
29.5 x 15.5 cm
Government Museum, Mathura, No. 38.39/2792



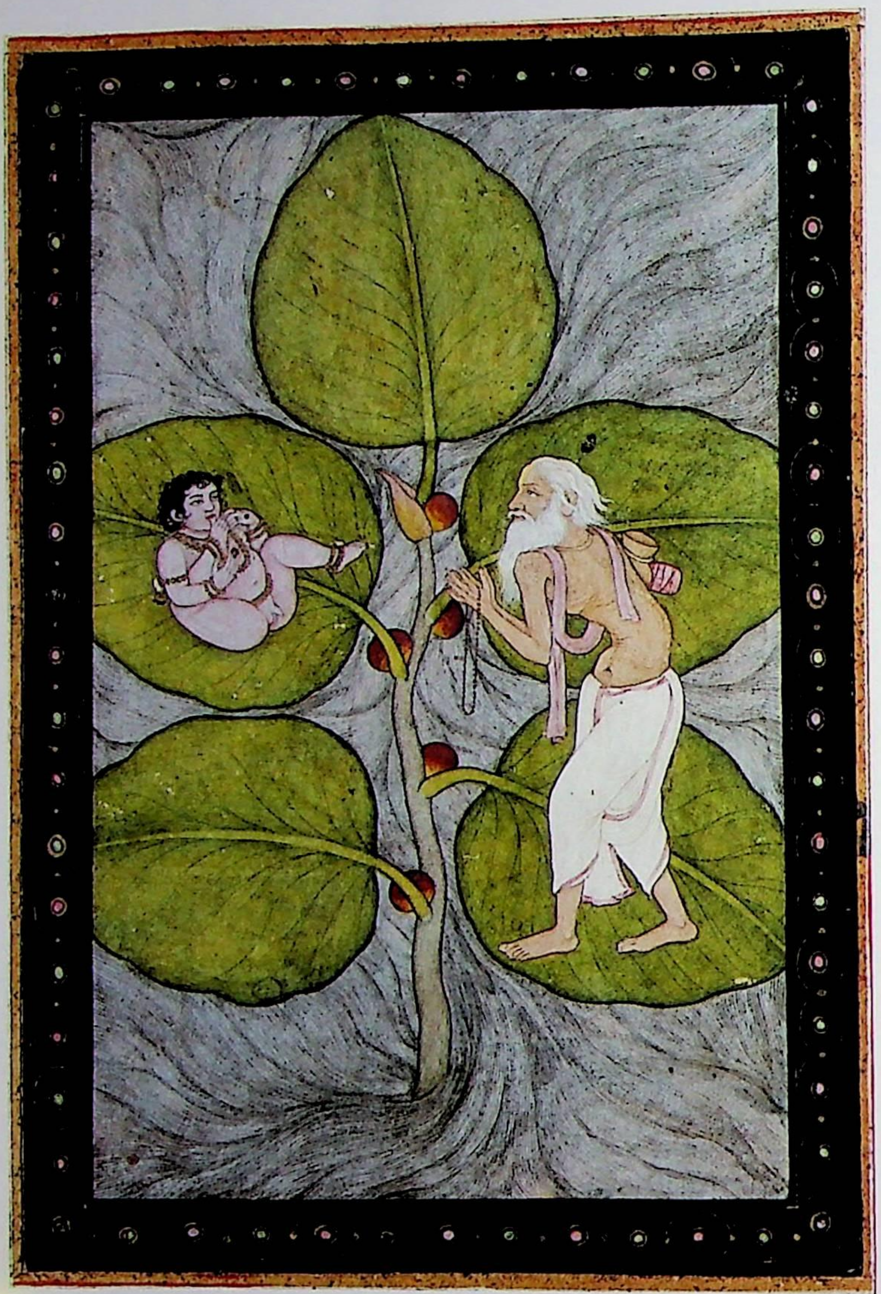
The exact import of this kneeling hermitlike figure is not easy to make out. It has been suggested at least once that this is an ascetic "offering his head," evidently in sacrifice. It is more likely, however, that the ascetic, or *rishi*, is represented here in the act of seeing a vision and, moved by it, raises his left hand in the air to touch his head as he holds an undefined object in his right hand against the chest. The upward tilt of the head, the kneeling posture, but above all, the look in the eye, suggests he is a witness to a great deed, a marvelous act, and is moved by it. As a *rishi*, seer, he would indeed have the power of the vision to see things ordinarily denied to others. As a devoted man of God, constantly meditating upon Him and upon the truths of life, one would legitimately expect him to be granted a vision.

Whatever is the true meaning of this figure, one is struck by its superb poetry. The ability of the artist to lend rhythmic movement to the figure, the play with the surface, the delineation of details such as the matted locks, the strands of hair in the beard, the texture and the weight of the scarf across the torso, and the lower garment that flares and stretches are all very impressive, while the ecstatic face with its serene expression compels attention.

Literature

In the Image of Man, London, 1982, No. 256; Mario Bussagli and C. Sivaramamurti, 5000 *Years of the Art of India*, New York, No. 145.

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177

THE VISION OF THE SAGE MARKANDEYA
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 4th quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 170

There is no final lifting of veils, but every now and then an especially privileged person, a sage or a lesser god, is allowed a glimpse of the divine play (*lila*) of Vishnu, the Supreme Spirit. As narrated in the *Bhagavata Purana* and other Vaishnava texts, one such vision was granted to Markandeya, the aeons–old deathless sage who had been wandering through the immense interval of the Night of Brahma, when everything that was, was contained within the sleeping body of Vishnu. Eager to know something of the truth behind this mirage, through Vishnu's divine will Markandeya slipped once into the shoreless waters in which he swam and floated for a countless measure of time, until he chanced, in that endless expanse, upon a strange sight: in the distance was a flow of light emanating, as he saw when he approached it, from the radiant body of a child sporting innocently and all alone upon a sprig of *banyan* (*Ficus indica*) leaves. Markandeya was greatly amazed and drew nearer; then he heard the child speak:

> I am thy parent, thy father and elder, Markandeya. . . . I am the Primal Cosmic Man, Narayana. . . . I am the Lord of Waters. . . . I am the cycle of the year, which generates everything and again dissolves it. I am the divine *yogi*, the cosmic juggler or magician, who works wonderful tricks of delusion.

Hearing these words, Markandeya understood and bowed.

The Pahari painter visualizes the scene superbly. The great expanse of the waters; the delightful little figure of Krishna, who is also Vishnu, winsomely putting his big toe into his mouth, this juxtaposition of innocence and age, of knowing and not-knowing, are all elements that the painter plays with and brings together with conviction in a work of great delicacy and refinement.

Literature

Walter Spink, *Krishnamandala*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1971, pp. 104–106; B.N. Goswamy *et al.*, *Krishna, The Divine Lover*, Lausanne, 1982.

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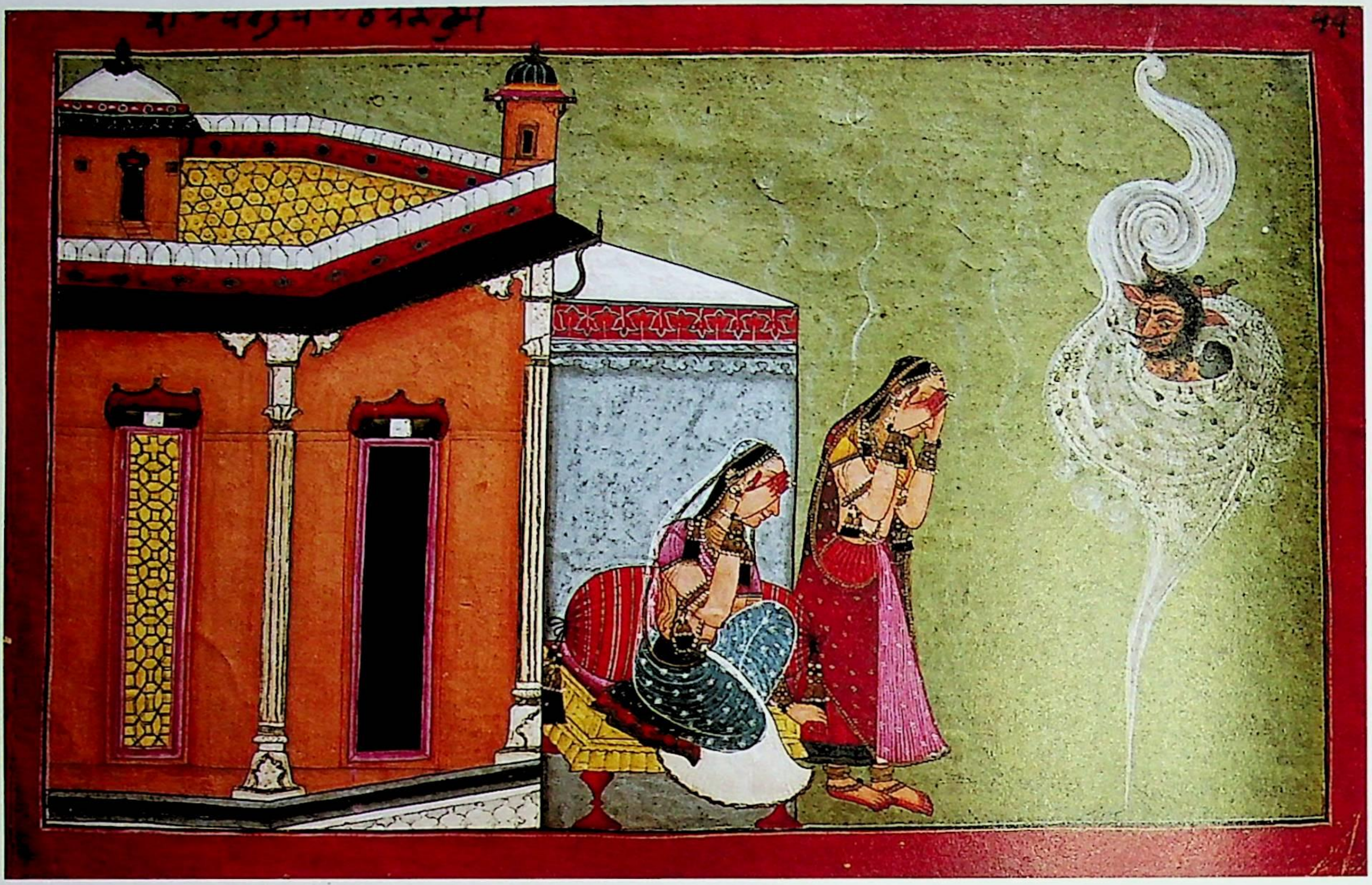
A SAGE SETS A HILL ON FIRE
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 4th quarter of the 18th century
From the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 929

In Indian thought the *rishis*, seers, are figures of great fascination, for they represent the powers of the mind. There are great names in myth and literature—Vashishtha, Vishwamitra, Markandeya, Agastya, Kapil, Jamadagni—men of God who set themselves the task of unraveling mysteries and seeing behind appearances. Penance or physical suffering are not required to attain powers of perception beyond human ken, but rather, they come through disciplining the mind, the development of intellectual faculties beyond the limits of most. But because these seers are clear of mind and intellect, they also come to acquire supernatural powers, which they do not ordinarily use but hold in reserve. When need arises, a sage such as Agastya can drink water of all the oceans and contain them. The sage in this painting seems to breathe a fire that sets whole mountains ablaze. The episode is not precisely identified, but the event takes place in the presence of hosts of *munis* and *siddhas*, including the celestial sage, Narada, who carries his twin-gourd *vina*.

The youthful, handsome sage who performs the miracle has renounced the world and sits alone under a tree on a tiger skin mat. He performs fire sacrifices (*yajnas*) regularly, indicated by the little brick enclosure inside which the sacred fire appears, and the libation implements at the side. The calabash of the sage rests on the tiger skin, completing the picture of renunciation. One does not know what occasion brings this wonderfully observed group of sages and recluses, young and old, to this lonely spot.

The emphasis in the painting is not on the performer but on his wondrous deed. The rising fire takes up a substantial portion of the picture. The hill in the middle, above the plateau where the sage is seated, is an unexpected feature: in contrast to the tall, dry rocks, there is a little verdant detail of a lotus pond with birds and animals at its edges.

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KRISHNA AND TRINAVARTA, THE WHIRLWIND DEMON
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
On top border, descriptive label in Takri
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
20.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1272

Even as an infant, Krishna is seen as a threat by his uncle Kamsa, for it had been prophesied that he would one day be killed at Krishna's hands. Taking preventive action, Kamsa decides to dispatch the many demons at his command to the village where, it has been reported, the child he dreads now lives with his foster parents. One of the demons, as the *Bhagavata Purana* narrates, was Trinavarta who could take the form of a whirlwind capable of covering whole villages with darkness. One day when Krishna is playing happily in the courtyard, Trinavarta arrives as a fearful storm, blowing dust and wind. Not suspecting anything, Krishna's mother and her maids quickly cover their eyes against the blowing dust. Seizing this opportunity, the demon picks up the child Krishna and flies high into the air, but not for long, for the divine child fathoms the demon's intentions. First he makes himself so heavy that Trinavarta slows his flight; then Krishna, seizing him by the throat, presses so hard that the demon is barely able to breathe. His eyes and then his veins bulge; finally his pupils turn up. When the storm blows over, the men and women of the village see to their amazement a demon fallen on the ground and Krishna, who had destroyed him "as Shiva had destroyed Tripurasura," playing on his massive chest as if nothing had happened.

The Mankot artist of this series carefully chooses the elements of the narrative. The sense of wonder lies in the discovery of Krishna playing upon the chest of the dead demon. The little head of Krishna next to the fearful visage of the horned demon in the eye of the storm, the uncertainty of Yashoda and her companions, begin to establish a mood. This is enhanced visually by the form of the whirlwind which appears like a spiraling conch shell. The painting demands careful observation; the dried leaves and specks of dust that make up the rising wisps of smoke, the delicately wrought patterns on door and roof, the fine designs on the dresses. But all this does not detract from the clarity or the intensity of the action, which centers around another of Krishna's marvelous deeds.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting,* New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills,* London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot; B.N. Goswamy, *The Bhagavata Paintings from Mankot,* 1978; Ibid. *et al., Krishna the Divine Lover,* Lausanne, 1982; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna,* West Franklin, 1980.

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180

THE CHILD KRISHNA UPROOTS TWO TREES
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 179
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
20.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1278

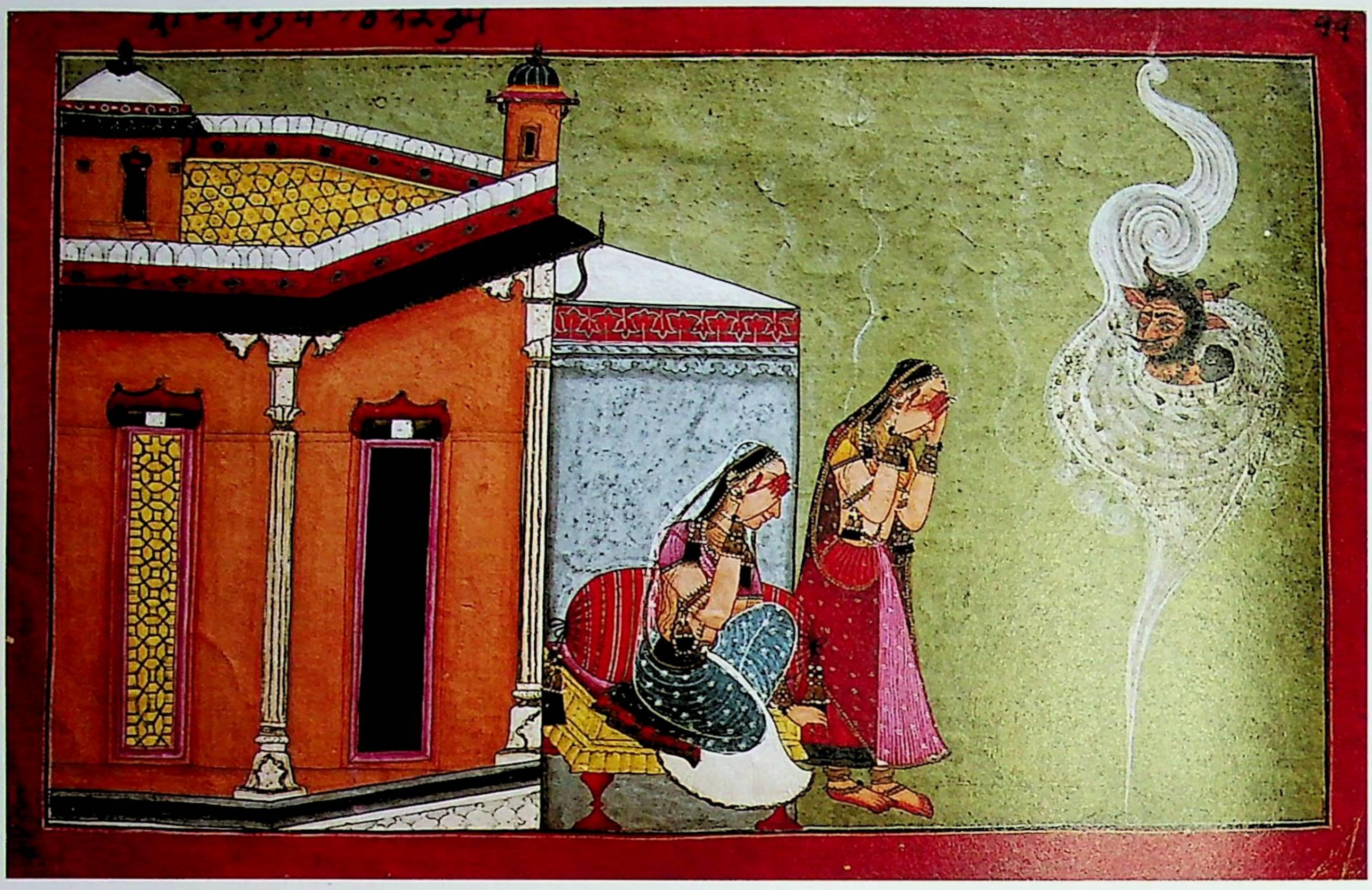
Krishna pays for one of his pranks. For all the love that his mother Yashoda and everyone else in the village bore him, there were times, the *Bhagavata Purana* says, when she found it necessary to chastise him. Finding Krishna stealing butter repeatedly, she decides to tie him to a large pestle that lay in the courtyard of their house. Doing this is not easy, for Krishna is nimble and difficult to catch, but she does finally succeed and, having tied him up, goes inside to catch her breath. But Krishna has plans of his own. Because of his divinity, he knows that the two *arjuna* trees close to where he is tied are actually two *yakshas,* Nalakuvara and Manigriva, who, cursed in an earlier time, had been turned into trees. Their salvation can come only at his hands. Slowly he drags himself to the trees, and bringing the pestle between them to get the necessary leverage, he pulls hard. The trees come free of their roots, releasing the two *yakshas,* who fly off singing praises of Krishna and celebrating their deliverance.

But inside there is wonder and amazement. Hearing the loud crash made by the uprooted trees, a maid runs inside to report to the disbelieving Yashoda the marvelous deed of this little child. Yashoda is wonderstruck. "He is truly no ordinary child," she says to herself, and then busies herself with the chores of the household.

The Mankot painter follows the narrative of the *Purana* text faithfully but picks the salient points very discerningly, so as not to clutter the page or confuse the viewer. The stark yellow ground outside, the beautiful pattern made by the trees which now cross each other, and the coiled rope from which Krishna has freed himself reveal an interest in surfaces, but the dominant impression is that of wonder, of the order that Yashoda and the maid inside the chamber at the left experience.

Literature
See No. 179.

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179

KRISHNA AND TRINAVARTA, THE WHIRLWIND DEMON
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
On top border, descriptive label in Takri
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
20.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1272

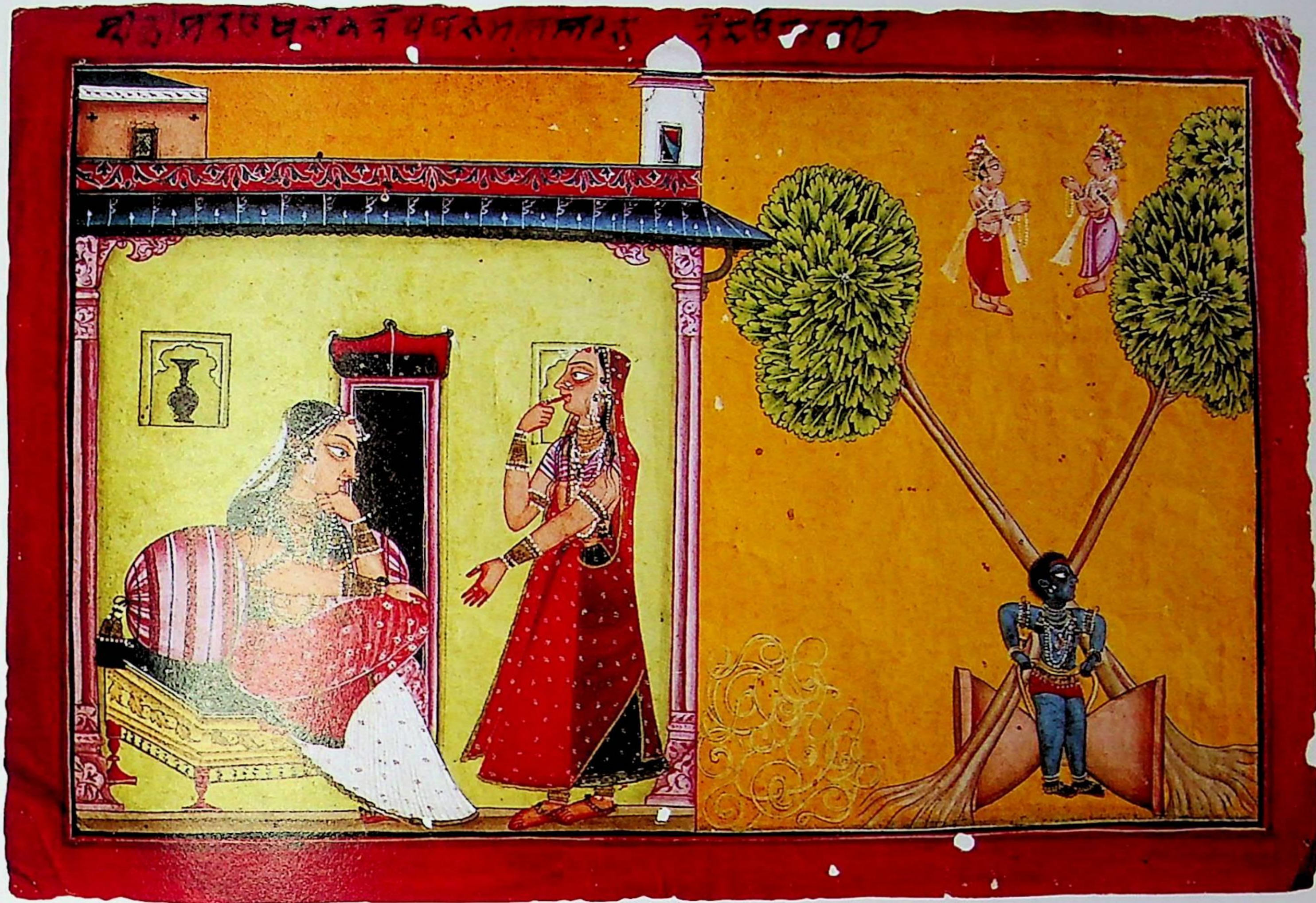
Even as an infant, Krishna is seen as a threat by his uncle Kamsa, for it had been prophesied that he would one day be killed at Krishna's hands. Taking preventive action, Kamsa decides to dispatch the many demons at his command to the village where, it has been reported, the child he dreads now lives with his foster parents. One of the demons, as the *Bhagavata Purana* narrates, was Trinavarta who could take the form of a whirlwind capable of covering whole villages with darkness. One day when Krishna is playing happily in the courtyard, Trinavarta arrives as a fearful storm, blowing dust and wind. Not suspecting anything, Krishna's mother and her maids quickly cover their eyes against the blowing dust. Seizing this opportunity, the demon picks up the child Krishna and flies high into the air, but not for long, for the divine child fathoms the demon's intentions. First he makes himself so heavy that Trinavarta slows his flight; then Krishna, seizing him by the throat, presses so hard that the demon is barely able to breathe. His eyes and then his veins bulge; finally his pupils turn up. When the storm blows over, the men and women of the village see to their amazement a demon fallen on the ground and Krishna, who had destroyed him "as Shiva had destroyed Tripurasura," playing on his massive chest as if nothing had happened.

The Mankot artist of this series carefully chooses the elements of the narrative. The sense of wonder lies in the discovery of Krishna playing upon the chest of the dead demon. The little head of Krishna next to the fearful visage of the horned demon in the eye of the storm, the uncertainty of Yashoda and her companions, begin to establish a mood. This is enhanced visually by the form of the whirlwind which appears like a spiraling conch shell. The painting demands careful observation; the dried leaves and specks of dust that make up the rising wisps of smoke, the delicately wrought patterns on door and roof, the fine designs on the dresses. But all this does not detract from the clarity or the intensity of the action, which centers around another of Krishna's marvelous deeds.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting,* New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills,* London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot; B.N. Goswamy, *The Bhagavata Paintings from Mankot,* 1978; Ibid. *et al., Krishna the Divine Lover,* Lausanne, 1982; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna,* West Franklin, 1980.

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180

THE CHILD KRISHNA UPROOTS TWO TREES
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 179
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from a Mankot workshop
20.5 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 1278

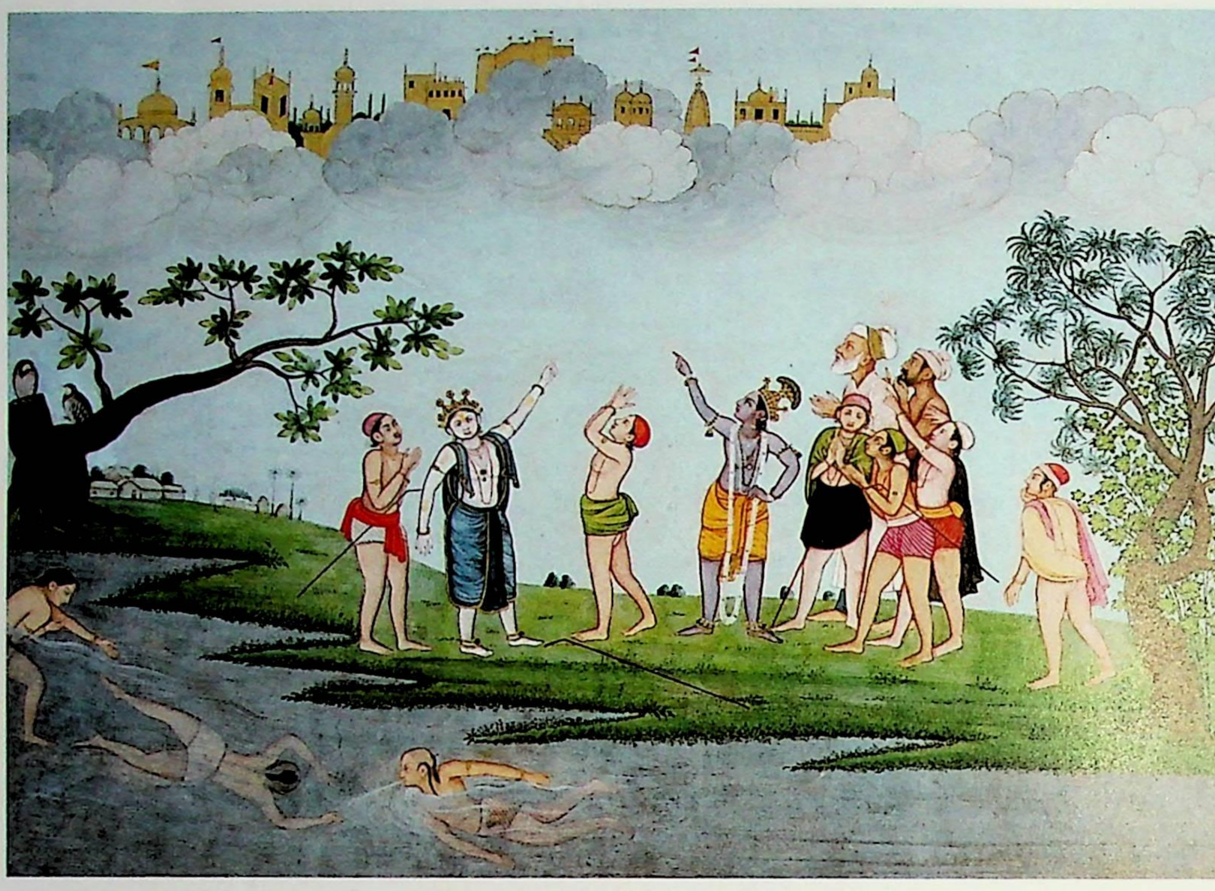
Krishna pays for one of his pranks. For all the love that his mother Yashoda and everyone else in the village bore him, there were times, the *Bhagavata Purana* says, when she found it necessary to chastise him. Finding Krishna stealing butter repeatedly, she decides to tie him to a large pestle that lay in the courtyard of their house. Doing this is not easy, for Krishna is nimble and difficult to catch, but she does finally succeed and, having tied him up, goes inside to catch her breath. But Krishna has plans of his own. Because of his divinity, he knows that the two *arjuna* trees close to where he is tied are actually two *yakshas,* Nalakuvara and Manigriva, who, cursed in an earlier time, had been turned into trees. Their salvation can come only at his hands. Slowly he drags himself to the trees, and bringing the pestle between them to get the necessary leverage, he pulls hard. The trees come free of their roots, releasing the two *yakshas,* who fly off singing praises of Krishna and celebrating their deliverance.

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The Mankot painter follows the narrative of the *Purana* text faithfully but picks the salient points very discerningly, so as not to clutter the page or confuse the viewer. The stark yellow ground outside, the beautiful pattern made by the trees which now cross each other, and the coiled rope from which Krishna has freed himself reveal an interest in surfaces, but the dominant impression is that of wonder, of the order that Yashoda and the maid inside the chamber at the left experience.

Literature
See No. 179.

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181

KRISHNA LIFTS A VEIL
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 51
On verso, Sanskrit text
Gouache on paper
3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 58.18/16

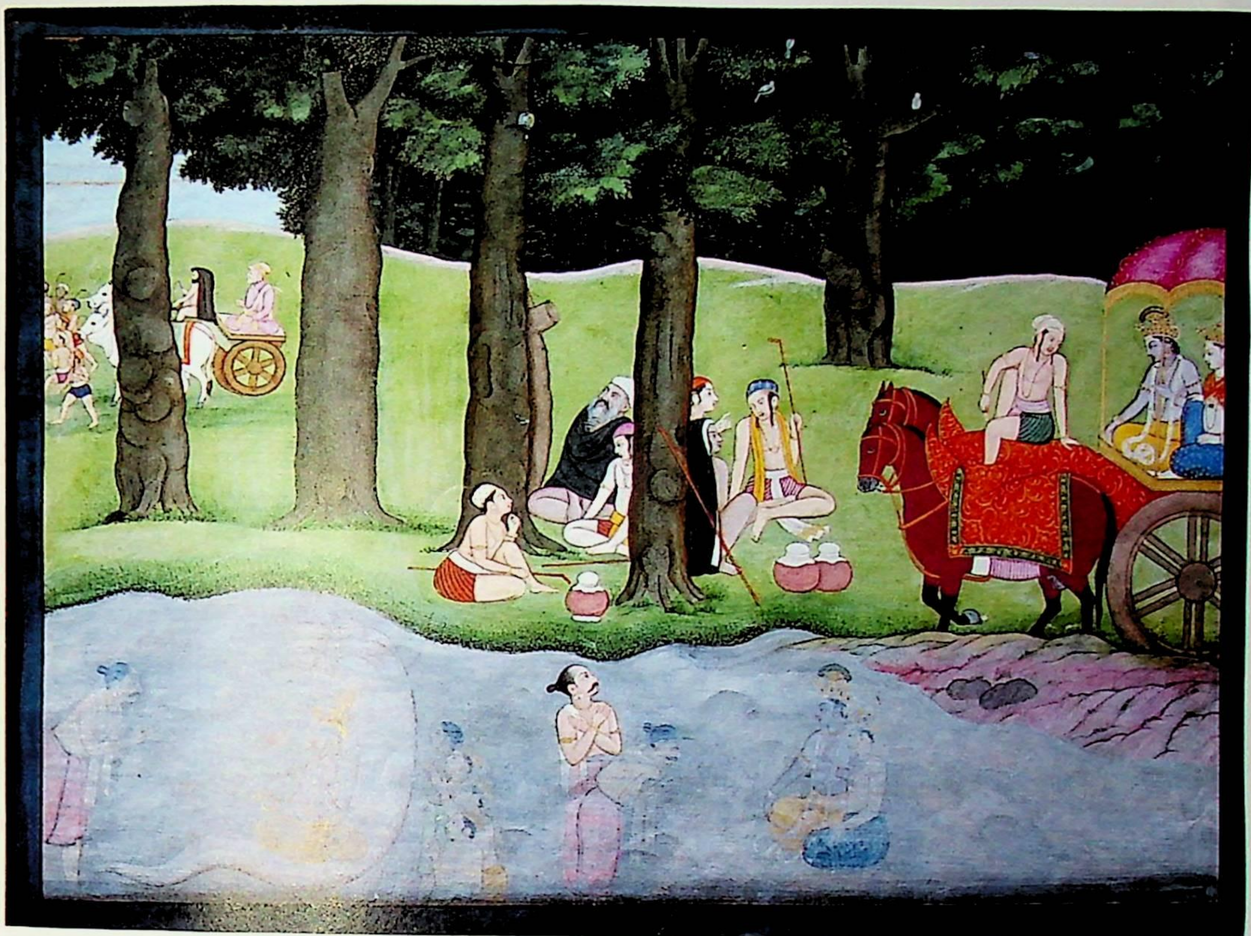
The devotees of Krishna remark even today that what the greatest of the sages longed for and could not attain sometimes came within reach of those simple *gopas* and *gopis*, essentially naive villagers, who grew up with Krishna, for such was their devotion to him, and such was the grace he conferred upon them out of fondness. On one occasion, as the *Bhagavata Purana* narrates, Krishna's foster father Nanda was taken away by the servants of Varuna, god of the waters and one of the guardians of the directions, because Nanda had inadvertently committed the sin of entering the waters after a fast (*vrata*) at an inappropriate time of the night. Krishna, learning this, followed Nanda and entered Varuna's heavenly kingdom where he was received with great honor. Varuna, admitting his error and offering Krishna homage, let Nanda return. But Nanda had seen the great beauty and the dazzling wealth of Varuna's heaven, as well as the veneration in which Krishna was held there. He related this to his kinsmen, who wondered what Krishna's own heaven must be like, for they were now certain that he was a god. Knowing their hearts' desire, Krishna decided, for their sake, to lift for a brief time the veil of mystery from his real self. He led them to the Brahmarad, the pool of absolute knowledge, and asked them to take a dip in it. When they came out, he pointed to the skies and in that moment a vision of Krishna's heavenly abode (*vaikuntha*) appeared, to which the pure go after death. Then, the vision was erased from their minds, for Krishna was to live with them as one of their own, not as a god.

The wondrous vision of the golden abode of Krishna, obscured partly by the clouds but revealed in its essence to his companions in all its dazzling beauty, fills the *gopas* with deep emotion. They fold their hands in obeisance, hold them up in wonder, look with disbelieving but affectionate looks. It is not Krishna alone but also Balarama, his brother (also a divine figure), who points up toward the vision. The attitudes of the simple *gopas* and of the elderly Nanda are admirably caught by the painter. The work does not possess the poetic quality of other folios of this *Bhagavata* series, but it still has marked sensitivity of line and color. The innovative treatment of the tree at left and the unexpected introduction of a pair of pheasants are to be noted.

The true meaning of this slightly obscure episode is elusive, for the narrator does not elaborate upon the pool of absolute knowledge in which the *gopas* are made to bathe. The painter therefore introduces the familiar Yamuna in which the *gopas* swim and play before they receive the vision.

Literature
See No. 51.

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182

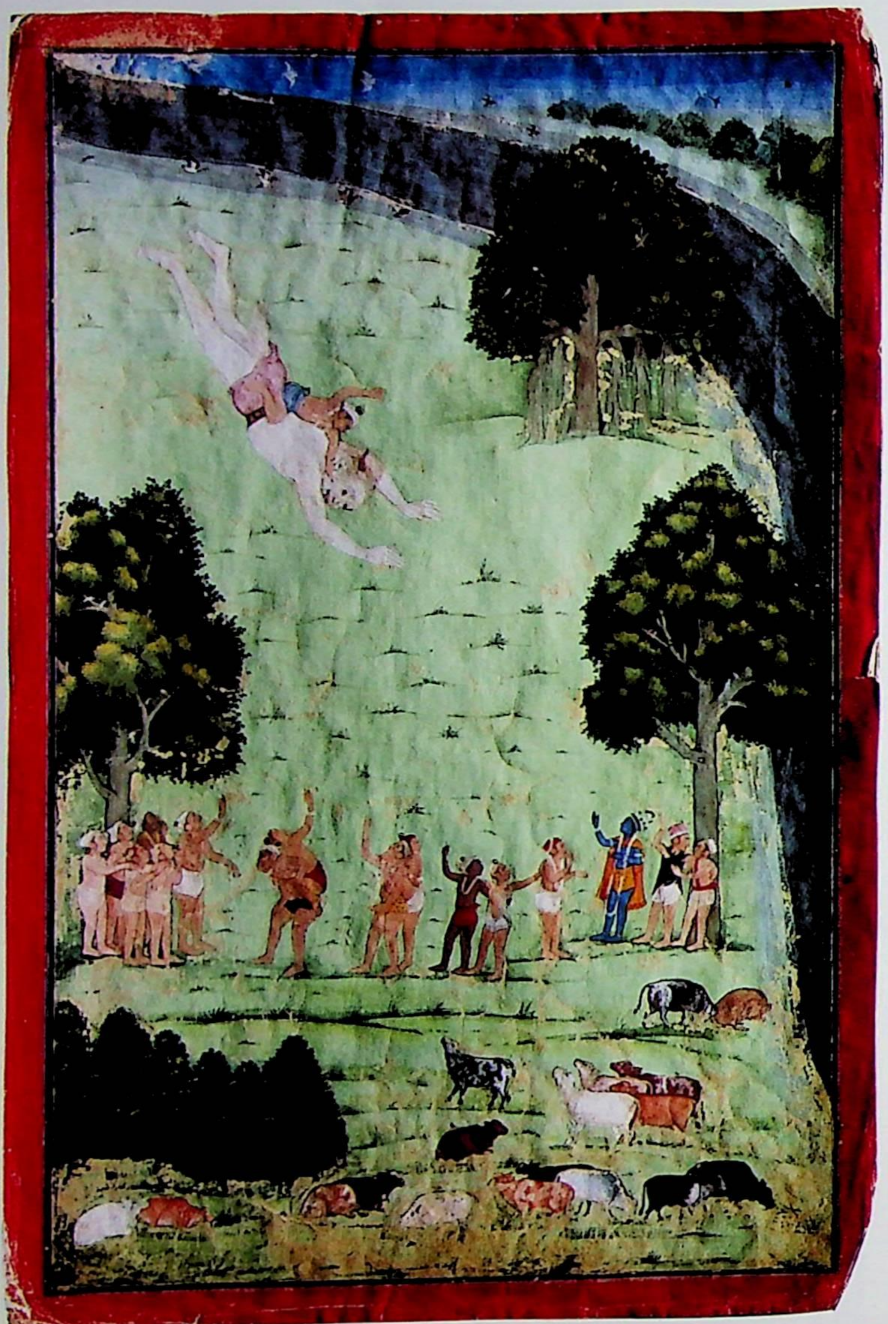
THE SAGE AKRURA SEES A VISION
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 51
On verso, long descriptive Sanskrit text
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
22.5 x 30.5 cm
Collection of Mr. Gopi Krishna Kanoria, Patna, No. VK 188

At a crucial point in his life, Krishna decided to move from the Vraja country, scene of his childhood and his youthful sports with his cowherd friends and the *gopis*, to Mathura where he was to fulfill his divinely ordained task of killing his uncle Kamsa, the evil king. The devoted sage Akrura took upon himself to drive Krishna, along with his elder brother Balarama, to Mathura in a chariot "swift as the wind." As they wended their way along the Yamuna and through the forest, Akrura halted and sought permission to take a bath in the sacred river. As he dipped his head in water, the text says, he "saw" the two brothers in the waters exactly as he had left them sitting in the chariot on the bank. Somewhat confused, he quickly raised his head and saw them seated as before. "I do not apprehend the mystery of their being out and in the water," Akrura said to himself, "but perhaps I am being deceived by my fancy." Thinking thus, he proceeded with his bath, dipping his head in the cooling waters of the Yamuna again. This time he saw in the water none else than Vishnu, reclining on his great serpent-couch, Shesha, upon the endless waters, "dark, like a cloud, clad in a yellow garment, four-armed, and with eyes tinged with red like lotus petals," attended by countless divine and semidivine devotees, sages, and *devas*, heads bent in homage. Then Akrura realized that he was witnessing a vision granted by Krishna, who had not uttered a word; Krishna was revealing to the sage his own identity with Vishnu: Krishna is Vishnu. Then, we are told, Akrura was no longer perplexed.

The setting is familiar: the green banks of the Yamuna, the wooded landscape, the broad stream of the river. But the painter slowly leads us into the mysteries of the situation. Outside, on the bank, nothing appears unusual—a routine scene of cowherds resting under a tree, a nobleman proceeding in a chariot at the extreme left, and the chariot with Krishna and Balarama standing at right. It is in the water that strange things happen. In a sequence, we notice Akrura under the water, where he sees the two brothers. We then see him quietly standing up and verifying for himself the presence of the two brothers on the bank. Finally, we see him having a vision of Vishnu in the depth of the waters at the left. Gently and surely we are led by the painter in this exquisitely drawn, finely realized work to identifying ourselves with Akrura's mystified state of mind.

Literature
See No. 51.

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183

THE KILLING OF THE DEMON PRALAMBASURA
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd half of the 17th century; from a Mandi workshop
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. E–60

This leaf is from a vertical *Bhagavata Purana* series about which scholarly opinion is sharply divided. One group of scholars believes it to be the product of a Bikaner atelier, while a slightly larger group believes it comes from a Mandi-Bilaspur source in the Pahari area. Evidently much depends upon which features one sees as significant, and which others one decides to underplay or ignore. This controversy aside, there is not much question about the high quality of this work, or of others from different sets in the same or a very closely related style.

The present leaf tells yet another episode from the childhood of Krishna and his elder brother, Balarama. This time Balarama is the hero: playing the game of pick-a-back in the forest with their cowherd friends, both Krishna and Balarama are quick to notice the odd conduct, if not the evil intent, of a demon who has joined the group disguised as one of them. Quite knowingly, Balarama gets on to the back of this demon, Pralambasura, which causes the demon to fly off at dizzying speed into the air. But he is a poor match for the power of his rider. When Balarama sees him assume his demonic form, he strikes him repeatedly with his powerful fists. Soon the demon begins to spit blood and, unable to withstand this ferocious assault, he flies back to earth, crashes, and dies.

By scaling the figures of Krishna and the *gopas* rather small as they excitedly watch Balarama's great feat in the air, and by showing Balarama himself dwarfed by the gigantic figure of the demon, the painter emphasizes the seemingly unequal nature of the struggle. This only enhances the sense of wonder and drama; it is not only the *gopas* who assume gestures of great surprise—raising their arms, touching their lips with extended fingers—even the cows grazing in the forest look up anxiously. In the composition, the painter pushes the terrain, edged by a sharply rising curve in the river, far upward; he also brings in different points of view including the aerial, and varies the scale of objects at will. The coloring of the work is distinctive, a jade green dominating much of the surface and the blue possessing an unusually deep ultramarine line. One also notices the convention of using pink-red shading on the faces, a feature that later Mandi painting was to emphasize.

Literature

Karl J. Khandalavala, "Two Bikaner Paintings in the N.C. Mehta Collection and the Problem of the Mandi School," *Chhavi II,* Varanasi, 1981; Catherine Glynn, "Early Painting in Mandi," *Artibus Asiae,* XLIII:1, 1981, pp. 21–64.

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184

KRISHNA DRINKS THE FOREST FIRE
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century; from a Mandi workshop
20 x 29 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 62.2375

The episode from the story of Krishna called "the drinking of the forest fire," is a great favorite with Rajput painters, not only because it figures prominently in the *Bhagavata Purana* to which they devoted several whole series, but also perhaps because it offered a peculiar kind of challenge. Early texts speak of the rendering of fire and the movement in the wind being some kind of test of a painter's skills. From the Rajput painter's point of view, this sequence combines all this with drama.

While out in the forest grazing cows along with his *gopa* companions, Krishna sees a fire break out in the bush. It spreads with alarming speed, flames rising madly into the air. Animals and reptiles are all trapped as it burns and singes, and when it advances toward the spot where the cowherds stand with their animals, they are terrified and turn to Krishna, as always, for succor. Krishna asks them to close their eyes for a moment and then, taking the fire in his cupped hands he "swallows" it, extinguishing it by taking it all into his belly. When the *gopas* and the cows, panting for breath, see him the next minute, the fire is out and all is quiet again.

This unfortunately damaged and fragmentary leaf comes from a large *Bhagavata Purana* series which is the subject of some debate among scholars, the question being whether it comes from Bikaner in Rajasthan or Mandi in the hills. It contains a dazzling rendering of the episode. The coloring is impeccable, and the composition, seen more or less from above, dwarfs the figures considerably. The sense of panic and urgency in the tightly closed eyes of the *gopas*, and the speed with which cows and straggling calves and cranes and peacocks rush to the safe spot, the unmoving singled-out figure of Krishna, but, above all, the crackling, sizzling circle of fire impart to it a sense of remarkable drama. It is the *adbhuta* character of this miraculous deed of Krishna's—something he does not wish his companions to witness, hence the closing of their eyes—that the painter sets out to establish.

Literature

In the Image of Man, London, 1982, No. 403; Catherine Glynn, "Early Painting in Mandi," *Artibus Asiae*, XLIII:i, 1981, pp. 21–64; Karl J. Khandalavala, "Two Bikaner Paintings in the N.C. Mehta Collection and the Problem of Mandi School," *Chhavi II*, Varanasi, 1981.

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185

KRISHNA AND MOUNT GOVARDHANA
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Rajasthan, 4th quarter of the 18th century; from a Jodhpur workshop
48 x 70 cm
Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur, No. 14 of the series, JR-1765

A delightful and slightly obscure passage preceding the description of the miraculous deed of Krishna lifting Mount Govardhana occurs in Book Ten of the *Bhagavata Purana*. Here Krishna enters into a long and somewhat philosophical discussion with his foster father Nanda and the elders of the village when he sees them preparing for an annual feast in homage to Indra, god of rains. Feigning innocence, Krishna asks them the purpose of all their elaborate preparations. Told that Indra, being the deity who controls the clouds and thus has power over their livelihood, needs to be propitiated in this manner, Krishna raises serious issues. It is not Indra, he says, that controls the rains; rather, all that the villagers cultivate and reap is through their own efforts, and if anyone needs to be propitiated, it is Mount Govardhana itself. The mountain gives much to the villagers—its grass to feed the cows, which then yield milk for their benefit. The mountain needs to be propitiated and worshipped, Krishna says, far more than Indra sitting in some remote heaven. While Krishna's intention may not have been to anger Indra, its effect certainly did. When Nanda and the elders agreed to Krishna's suggestion that the feast in honor of Indra be replaced by a feast in honor of Mount Govardhana, Indra vows to teach these rustics a lesson and unleashes great and incessant rains upon the whole region, leading to the miracle of Krishna lifting the mountain to protect his kinsmen.

Here the painter involves himself with the episode immediately preceding the lifting of the mountain. Great preparations are under way toward the left; different things happen in different homes. Krishna consults with the village elders, the women of the households cook and prepare delicacies—professional cooks are similarly engaged inside another household—and women set out carrying vessels, evidently containing edibles for the feast in honor of Govardhana. In the middle of the picture delicacies are being carried by cartloads toward the mountain, while the villagers gather at the foot of the mountain, paying homage to this "giver of plenty." The mountain, treated in brilliant colors with stylized peaks of

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purple, pink and grey heaped one upon the other, sprouts stylized trees and caves in which animals lurk. But over it towers a dark-bodied, crowned figure who reaches an enormous arm across the mountain and partakes of the food offerings placed in front of it. This figure is Krishna, who appears both as worshipper and worshipped. Speaking in his "low, rumbling voice" he announces to the *gopas* that he is the incarnation of Mount Govardhana. Hearing this everyone is greatly amazed. A kind of postscript to this scene appears, top right, where a little vignette shows Indra's golden mansions in the heavens, as news of the villagers' act of defiance is carried to Indra by his agents. A strip running horizontally across virtually the whole page at the top contains a long descriptive passage in Rajasthani Hindi and written in Devanagari script; it explains the scene below.

The painting comes from an extensive series prepared, according to an early publication of the Sardar Museum, "in the reign of Maharaja Bijay Singh, the ruler of Marwar [1752–93 A.D.], who was a staunch Vaishnava." The series as it survives is incomplete, but more than 130 paintings are extant. The style is not quite what we associate with Jodhpur in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. There seems to have been a Bikaner workshop of painters that influenced Jodhpur work at this time, and the present series is possibly the product of this rather interesting coming-together of two styles. There is a lively imagination at work here; the painter treats elements of time and space as he goes along, without working out a rigid theory. But he is also aware of dramatic possibilities, such as the enormous figure of Krishna as Govardhana.

Literature

Vishweshwar Nath Reu, *Paintings of the Bhagavata Purana in the Sardar Museum Jodhpur.*



186

KRISHNA LIFTING MOUNT GOVARDHANA
Stone
12th century; Hoysala country, Karnataka
150 cm
Archaeological Museum, Halebid, No. 401

Among the most famous deeds of Krishna, the most marvelous is the episode in which he lifts Mt. Govardhana. It is the act that, in the eyes of his devotees, makes him worthy of a new title, *Govardhanadhari.* He does not perform this deed to protect himself from the demon envoys of Kamsa, but to protect his kinsmen from the rage of Indra, king of the gods and master of rain and thunder. Krishna had interfered with the worship of Indra. This enrages the god who unleashes his anger in the form of a violent storm over the entire region of Vraja. Krishna comes quickly to the aid of the villagers; in one quick movement, he uproots Mount Govardhana and holds it up with the little finger of his left hand. Although the storm continues for seven days and seven nights, the inhabitants of Vraja remain unharmed as Krishna holds the mountain over them like a gigantic parasol.

The scene has become far more elaborate in the hands of this Hoysala sculptor than is appropriate to a forest setting at the end of a village. Rather, it takes on a vast, reverberating character. The *gopis,* Krishna's companions, and their cows all stand next to him, looking up with love and adoration in their eyes. In the manner associated with him, the Hoysala sculptor gives surfaces incredible richness, using the most fanciful patterning, expanding, altering, virtually transforming through excessive ornament even objects that are familiar. The figure of Krishna holding up the mountain, standing in *tribhanga* posture under the heavy arch of the mountain, occupies the center of the panel. The eye tends to wander, getting lost in the intricacies of the design, and a sense of unreality results.

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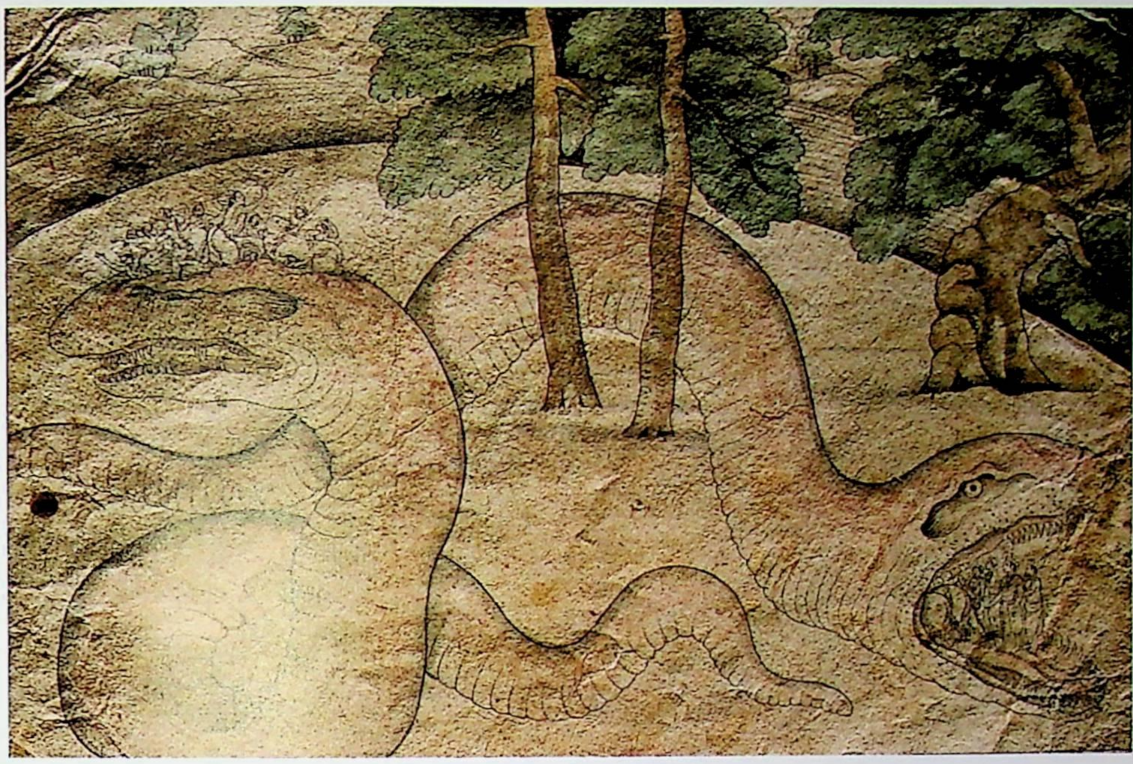


187

KRISHNA LIFTING MOUNT GOVARDHANA
Wood with polychrome
18th century; from Orissa
81 x 44 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 79.459

One knows the subject well: Indra, the god of rain and thunder, takes offence at the villagers of the Vraja country giving up their worship of him. He unleashes a deluge of rain upon the area and the herdsmen panic, uttering piteous appeals to Krishna to save them. Finally Krishna, performing one of his most celebrated miracles, lifts the whole mountain and holds it like an umbrella to save his kinsmen, a deed that confers upon him a well-loved epithet, "Govardhana-dhari" (Bearer of the mountain Govardhana). One rarely sees the scene carved in wood on so ambitious a scale. Quite naturally the sculptor works within limitations imposed by the nature of his material and the scale he chooses, but succeeds in communicating the essence of the moment. The monumental stone stele with the same theme from the Hoysala country is also on view (No. 186), captures the sense of awed wonder that fills Krishna's kinsmen, as it does his countless devotees.

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188

THE SLAYING OF THE DEMON AGHASURA
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Brush drawing and wash on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 476

The interest of a work like this, so extraordinarily close to No. 189, lies in seeing how the painters worked within a tradition. The natural assumption—in this case correct—would be that the drawing was made prior to the painting, which is then based upon it. But within the tradition the reverse could also be true, for sometimes paintings were made the basis for drawings copied from them for finishing later. For example, a patron might show a painting, acquired by him from another source, to his retained artist and ask him to make another like it. In an artist-family, sometimes a younger painter would copy as a drawing a well-loved painting to keep it with him for future use, perhaps when he left the family home to take up employment elsewhere. Tracings (*charbas*) were also used, but freehand drawing based on a finished painting was not uncommon.

A drawing like this was not necessarily the first thought an artist put on paper. Before it, a swiftly turned-out first sketch, freely done in vermilion with a brush (a *sindhuri khaka*) was made, containing only a rough notion of the composition and the subject. One knows this from several such drawings that have survived. An extensive set of *Ramayana* drawings by Ranjha in the Bharat Kala Bhavan serves as an example, as do the *Nala Damayanti* drawings, which have survived in different stages.

This highly finished and accomplished but unprimed drawing, apparently based on a brush sketch, must have stayed in its present form with the family of painters, simply because it was not meant to be turned into a painting. It was used as an exemplar, and thus became the source of a finished painting, perhaps more than one, that different members of an artist family might have attempted. But for a little tinting in the trees, the drawing is uncolored. Only careful study reveals the difference between it and the finished painting (No. 189): the fangs visible in the python-demon's mouth at left have been eliminated in the painting; the thickness of the demon's body has been varied; there are minor changes in the landscape beyond the river, as in the placing of the two trees that stand within the sweeping curve of the demon's body. But these are individual liberties taken by an artist with a master-drawing.

A large number of similarly executed drawings of this series have survived, although only a few have been published. The drawings are marginally earlier than the painting but fall within the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

Literature

For a general discussion of drawings: B.N. Goswamy, "The Artist Ranjha and a Dated Set of *Ramayana* Drawings," *Chhavi I*, Varanasi, 1971; also: *Pahari Paintings of the Nala Damayanati Theme*, New Delhi, 1975. For several drawings from this series, see B.N. Goswamy *et al.*, *Krishna, the Divine Lover*, Lausanne, 1982.

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189

THE SLAYING OF THE DEMON AGHASURA
From a *Bhagavata Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
16 x 25 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 6855

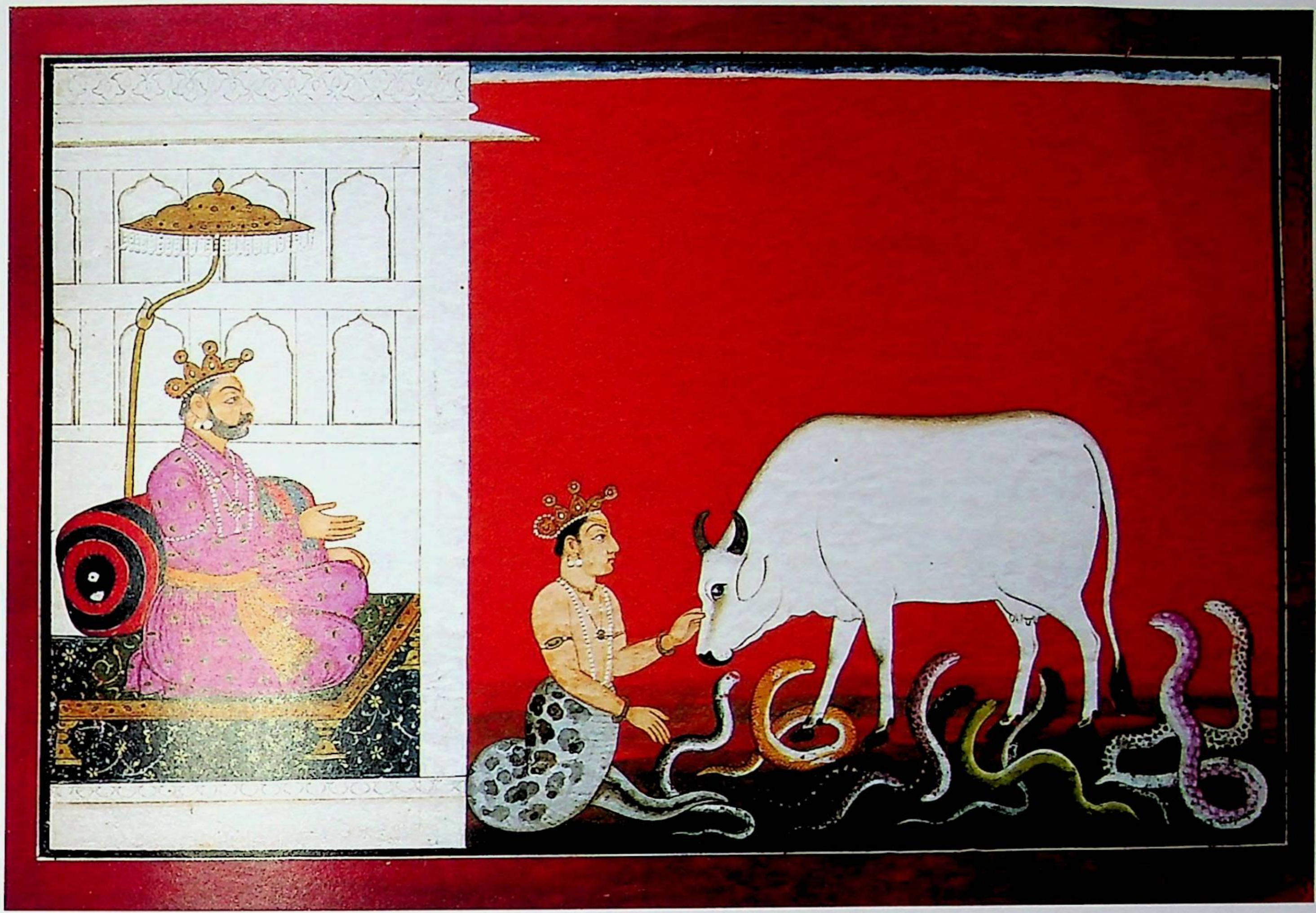
Among the many demons that the evil Kamsa pressed into service to try to kill Krishna his nephew, was Agha, who took the form of an enormous python. One day, in the verdant meadow where Krishna used to go with his cowherd friends and their cows, a python lay waiting for them. He had, as the text says, stretched his mouth so wide that it appeared to be a path through the forest and the green. The unsuspecting cows and cowherds followed it, thus walking into the very mouth of Agha, who had planned on crushing them and finishing Krishna off for good. But Krishna knew exactly what he was doing, for, once inside the belly of the python, just as the great reptile was about to close his mouth upon them, Krishna encouraged his companions to concentrate their efforts and heave themselves out of the cavernous gloom within the serpent. But the effort of the cowherds was only for show; it was Krishna who miraculously tore the roof of Agha's mouth apart. Joyous and unscathed, the companions emerged from their fearsome dungeon as the reptile gave up the ghost.

The cooling greens of the groves of Vrindavana are as alluring as ever in this painting; the Yamuna flows by their side in a sweeping curve; everything is quiet and luxuriant. By creating this placid setting, the painter contrasts the quietness of the landscape with the dangers lurking in it. The pink, scaly body of Agha, his enormous fangs protruding, lies curled in this green; at the extreme right, Krishna and Balarama bring up the rear of the group that has already walked innocently into Agha's mouth. A python and the same group appear again at the left, in the convention of continuous pictorial narration, where Krishna and his companions emerge, hands raised in joy and relief. In contrast, the python's head is a picture of agony as he screws up his eyes, and twists and curls his body in the throes of death.

With great economy and an eye to bringing out the drama in each episode, the painter of this best-known of the Pahari *Bhagavata Puranas* creates a startling pattern. The figures of Krishna and his companions are made deliberately small in comparison with the enormous dimensions of Agha, but there is no wavering, no relaxation of the line which remains, as always in this set, elegant and controlled.

Literature
Published in *Chhavi II*, Varanasi, 1981, pl. 28.

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190

THE MILKING OF PRITHVI
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 83
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
22 x 32.5 cm
Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute, Udaipur, No. 1527/71

In a grand, eloquent myth, the *Bhagavata Purana* explores the nature of kingship, the crucial role of the king in keeping society together, and the question of legitimacy behind the powers assumed by a king. Once, it says, the earth was without a king, Vena the last king having died without issue. Disaster loomed everywhere: lawless bands roamed the quarters, famine stalked the land, the entire population lived in fear and on the point of decimation. In these circumstances, wise and learned men, sages and Brahmins, got together and, "churning" the limbs of the deceased king, they took out Prithu, the most perfect of kings, a veritable incarnation of Vishnu. But Prithu had to struggle hard to establish his dominion, his power over the earth, Prithvi. Prithvi would not yield her treasures to him. Eager to feed his subjects and to bring stability to his kingdom, Prithu decided to force Prithvi but she would elude him each time. Finally, enraged, he set an arrow to his bowstring and pursued her with all his might, ready to shoot. Prithvi took the form of a cow and ran, but the king caught up with her and was about to kill her when she pleaded with him to spare her life. She was not yielding any "milk," any treasures at all, she said, because she had dried up. The milk of her bounties would flow only if she could first suckle a proper calf; then in appropriate vessels she would yield appropriate bounties, if milked properly. At this, Prithu urged all creatures on this earth, semidivine, subdivine, human, animals, reptiles, and so on, to milk Prithvi, each in their turn. Thus did she yield to each category what was appropriate to it.

The painter of this highly inventive series treats this episode in a sequence of paintings. Each time, as Prithu is shown watching from his chamber at left, different creatures approach Prithvi, who stands in the form of a cow—*yakshas, asuras*, gods, quadrupeds, birds. Here the serpents take their turn. Their chief, Takashaka, becomes the suckling calf, and different kinds of snakes take from the earth what they can: with their mouths as the receptacles, they receive from the Earth poison as their share. The sequence gives the painter remarkable opportunity for indulging his innovative powers, as in this startling picture.

Literature
See No. 83.

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191

THE DEMONESS SHURPANAKHA ASSUMES HER REAL FORM
From the same *Ramayana* series as No. 119
On verso, Sanskrit verses, descriptive text
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
22 x 31 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. E–98

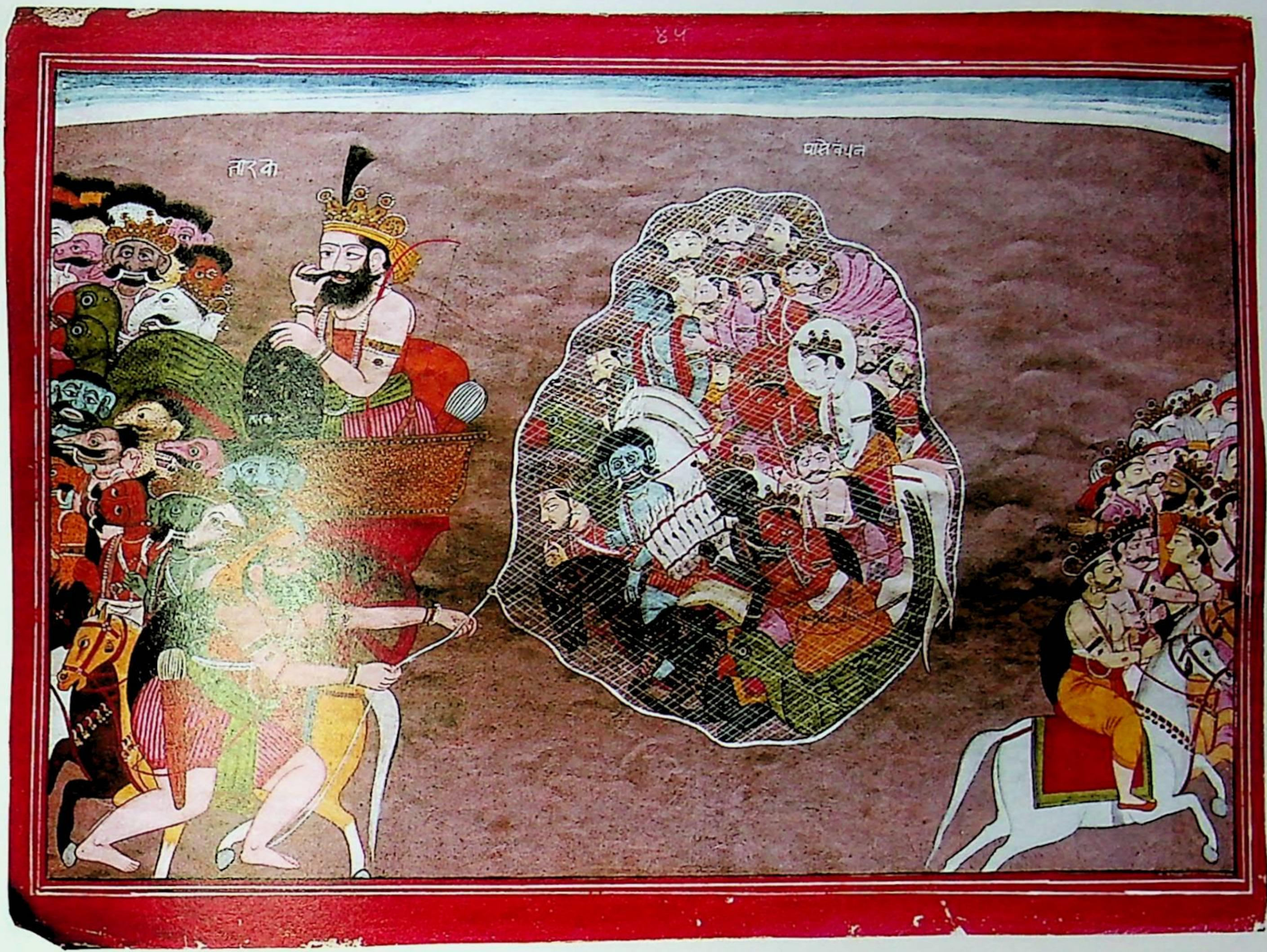
In the long years of exile in which he was accompanied by his devoted wife Sita and his younger brother Lakshmana, Rama, the hero of the *Ramayana*, walked a hazardous course. This painting depicts an extraordinary event, the first in a chain that culminated in the abduction of Sita and the final battle between Rama and the mighty Ravana, demon king of Lanka.

Shurpanakha, Ravana's sister, chances upon Rama and Lakshmana in their forest hut and falls head over heels in love with them. But despite her assumed form of a beautiful damsel, they make light of her advances and rail at her, for neither Rama nor Lakshmana could be tempted; nonetheless, Shurpanakha persists and will not take no for an answer. Lakshmana, greatly incensed, decides to teach her a lesson. With his sword he cuts off her nose and ears, and in that instant, Shurpanakha assumes her true, hideous form. Wailing aloud and greatly enraged, she flies off toward Lanka, her brother's kingdom, to urge him to punish the two forest-dwelling brothers.

The painter uses the convention of continuous narration to evoke a sense of wonder. On the same leaf we see Shurpanakha first as a beautiful maiden pounced upon by Lakshmana, and then, much to everyone's amazement, flying off, appearing dark and misshapen with a curling tongue, long fangs, bristling hair, and pendulous breasts. Neither Rama nor Lakshmana had suspected she might be a demoness; the element of surprise is complete.

Literature
See No. 119.

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192

THE GODS CAUGHT IN TARAKA'S NET
From a *Shiva Purana* series
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Kangra workshop
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 534

In an extensive series that runs into hundreds of leaves, the Pahari painter here treats a long and involved episode of the battle between the gods and *asuras*, the latter led this time by the powerful Taraka. The gods are in dire straits and, sensing their helplessness against the might of the demonic hordes, they resort to Shiva, begging him to provide them with a leader. This in turn leads to the birth of Kumara, Shiva's son, who was to become the general of the armies of the gods and thus take on Taraka.

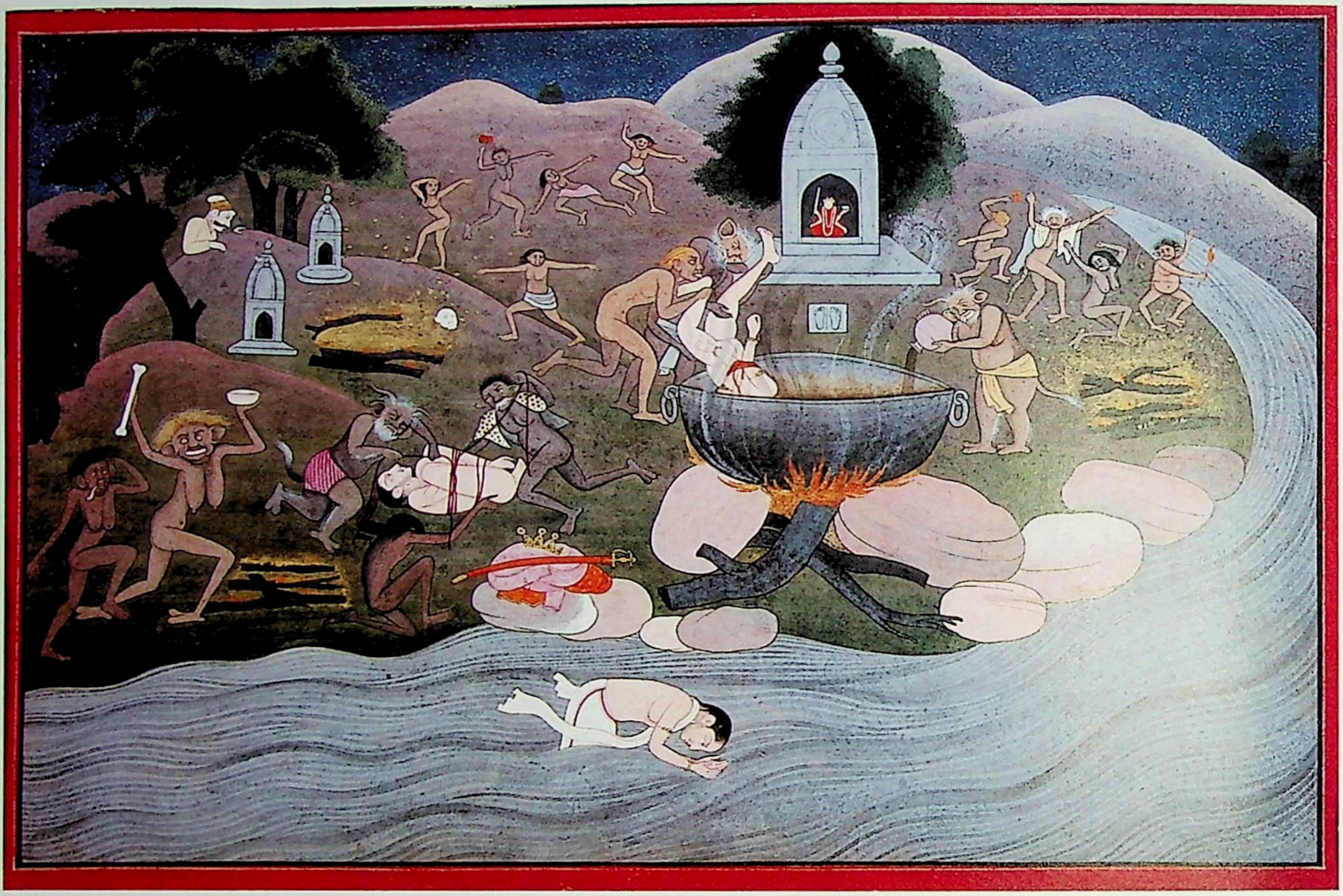
For the moment, however, the struggle continues without the leadership of Kumara, and clearly the gods are at the receiving end. Fierce engagements have ensued, but the outcome always favors the demons. On one occasion, Taraka devises an extraordinary plan and throws a gigantic net (*pasha*) in which he captures nearly all the principal leaders of the gods. While the remainder of the gods' forces takes to its heels at the extreme right, the leaders, including Vishnu on Garuda, Surya on his seven-horse chariot, Chandra, and Yama on a dark buffalo-mount, are caught in the net, one end of which Taraka holds in his hands at the extreme left. The demon is pleased with his chariot, proudly twirling his moustache as his hordes of horned, strangely-shaped demons look greatly satisfied with this outcome.

The marvelous deed of Taraka is presented by the painter in graphic detail, and his composition shows a certain boldness. The line is not as fine or as assured as in other Pahari works of this period, but the coloring comes as a compensation: it is rich and bright, something we associate with the artist-family of Purkhu of Samloti in Kangra, from whose atelier this series seems to have come.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, "Kangra Paintings Illustrating the Life of Shiva and Parvati," *Roopalekha*, XXIV:1–2, 1953, pp. 23–29; Karl J. Khandalavala, *Pahari Miniature Painting*, Bombay, 1958; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Garhwal, No. 34.

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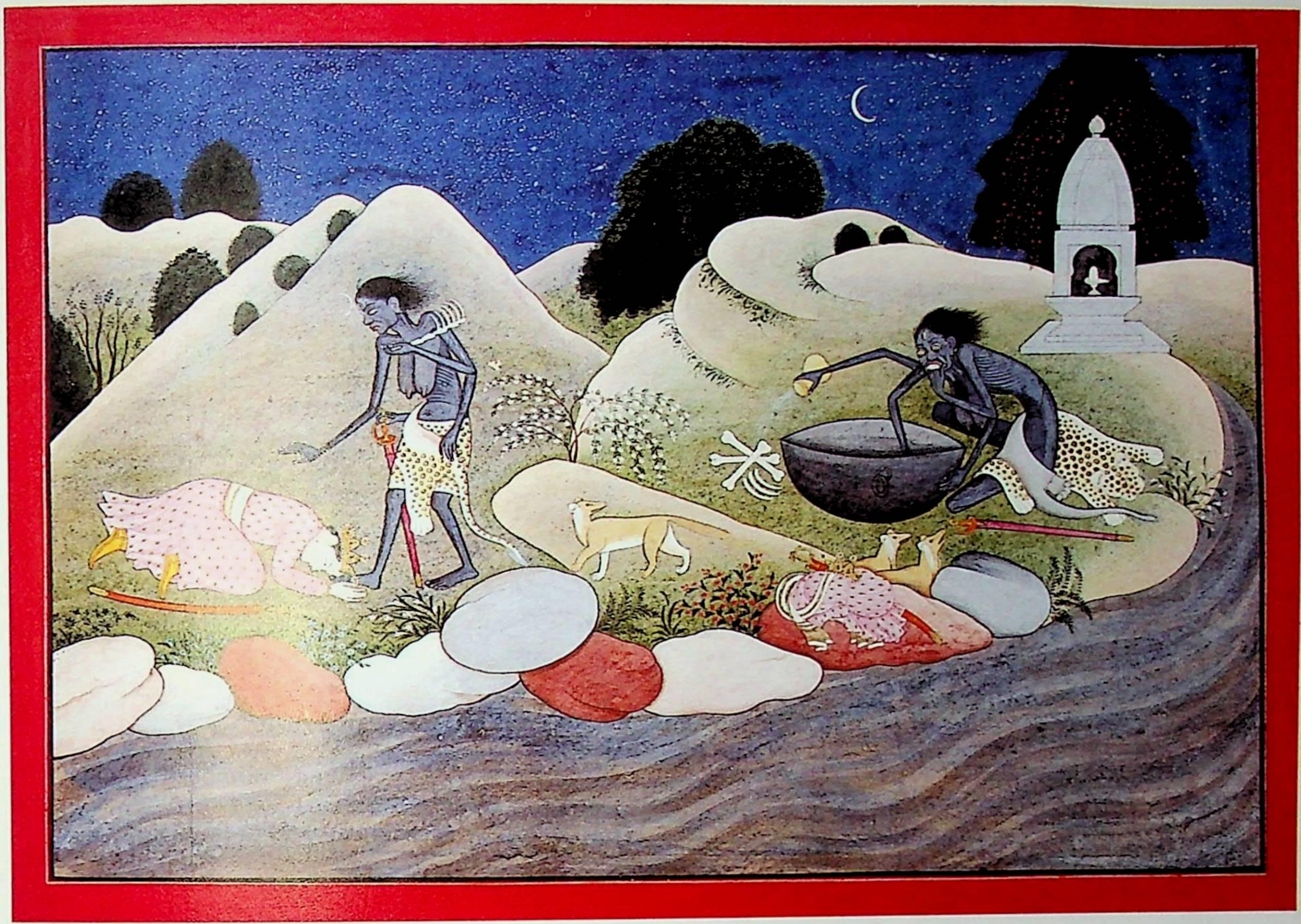
193

STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN THE NIGHT
Episode from a Vikrama story in the *Simhasana Battisi* (Thirty-two Tales of the Throne)
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 878

From the absorbing but strangely convoluted stories that constitute the *Simhasana Battisi*, a folk classic woven around the virtues of the legendary Raja Vikramaditya, comes the tale that the Pahari painter visualizes here. The format of the stories is that Raja Bhoja finds by accident an old throne supported by thirty-two female figurines (*putlis*) carved in wood. Greatly pleased—for it is actually the throne of Vikramaditya—he decides to use it himself. But as he prepares to ascend it, suddenly one of the carved figures laughs aloud and addresses Bhoja, asking him first to deserve to sit on this great throne by emulating at least some of the virtues and excellences of the great Vikramaditya. Each day as the raja prepares to mount the throne, another figure in turn speaks to him, telling him a tale that illustrates Vikramaditya's qualities. Hearing this, Bhoja desists, becomes introspective, and waits for the next day, when the same process is repeated, and the next figure speaks, telling him yet another tale.

The present episode is taken from the narration of the twelfth figure, named Kirtimati. As Bhoja prepares to mount the throne, Kirtimati laughs and says that only a great and magnanimous king like Vikramaditya deserves to mount it, one who gave everything for the sake of his people. She then narrates the story of how Vikramaditya had heard of another raja living at the seaside, the embodiment of all kingly virtues and a paragon of generosity. Assuming a disguise, Vikramaditya went to that raja's kingdom and offered his services for exorbitant terms, holding out the promise that he would some day do for the raja what no one else was capable of doing. This raja was in the habit of giving away a hundred thousand rupees each day. Eager to know the source of this untold wealth, Vikramaditya followed the raja in the dead of the night out of the palace toward a forest at the water's edge, close to a temple dedicated to the Devi. Hiding behind a tree, Vikramaditya saw an enormous gathering of *yoginis* and other female spirits. A great cauldron had been set on the fire and the *yoginis* moved around it in glee, anticipating a feast. Without a moment's hesitation, the raja entered the water to cleanse himself, came out, and then jumped into the boiling cauldron. Immediately after

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this the *yoginis* gathered there, took the raja's body out, and apportioning it equally, ate it. The raja's skeleton was left intact. Kankalin, the emaciated *yogini*, sprinkled nectar (*amrita*) on the bones, and the raja sprang back to life. Then he received from the gratified goddess one hundred thousand rupees, and returned to his palace to give this money away to the poor and the needy next morning.

The story goes on, but in this painting we see Vikramaditya hidden among the trees toward the top left, watching the proceedings. The scene is macabre and graphic, with naked and hideous *yoginis* dancing about frenetically in front of the goddess's temple. The emphasis on the activities of the *yoginis*, their crazed movements, the cheerfulness with which they consume the raja's body, all are captured by the painter with great flare. The stillness of the night forms a perfect setting for the wondrous happenings that a disbelieving Vikramaditya sees from a distance. In the midst of so much activity, the painter carves out quiet areas like the expanse of water in which the raja bathes, and the corner in which Vikramaditya lurks behind small votive shrines, all serving to throw into relief the strange happenings of the night.

Literature

Rajendra B. Prasad, *Qissa Simhasana Battisi*, Varanasi [n.d.], pp. 49–53.

194

VIKRAMADITYA RECEIVES BLESSINGS FROM THE GODDESS

From the same *Simhasana Battisi* series as No. 193
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 386

The story told by Kirtimati, the twelfth carved figure supporting the throne of Vikramaditya, continues on this leaf. Having seen the remarkable nocturnal happenings and the great self-sacrificing deed of a raja willing to die each night to secure from the goddess the gift of money which he gave away each day, Vikramaditya decides to do something himself. The next night, he stealthily moves to the same spot as the raja whose service he had entered in disguise, and follows the same procedure. Having bathed he throws himself into the cauldron for his body to be consumed by the *yoginis*, with rather the same results. His bones and ribs are gathered by the goddess, for she is disguised as the skeletal Kankalin, and as she sprinkles nectar on his remains, he springs back to life. Not content with doing this just once, Vikramaditya repeats the deed as many as eight times. Finally, greatly pleased with him, the goddess asks him to ask for anything he wishes, and Vikramaditya

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begs her to give him the bag from which she takes the one hundred thousand rupees each night to give to Vikramaditya's employer, the generous raja. With it he returns to the palace. The story goes on to relate how the generous raja then goes to the usual spot but finds that temple and the entire scene have vanished as if by magic. Desolate, he returns when suddenly Vikramaditya, fulfilling his promise, offers him the magic bag from which to take as much money as he wishes to give to his people. Such was the magnanimity of that raja and of Vikramaditya, says the carved figure.

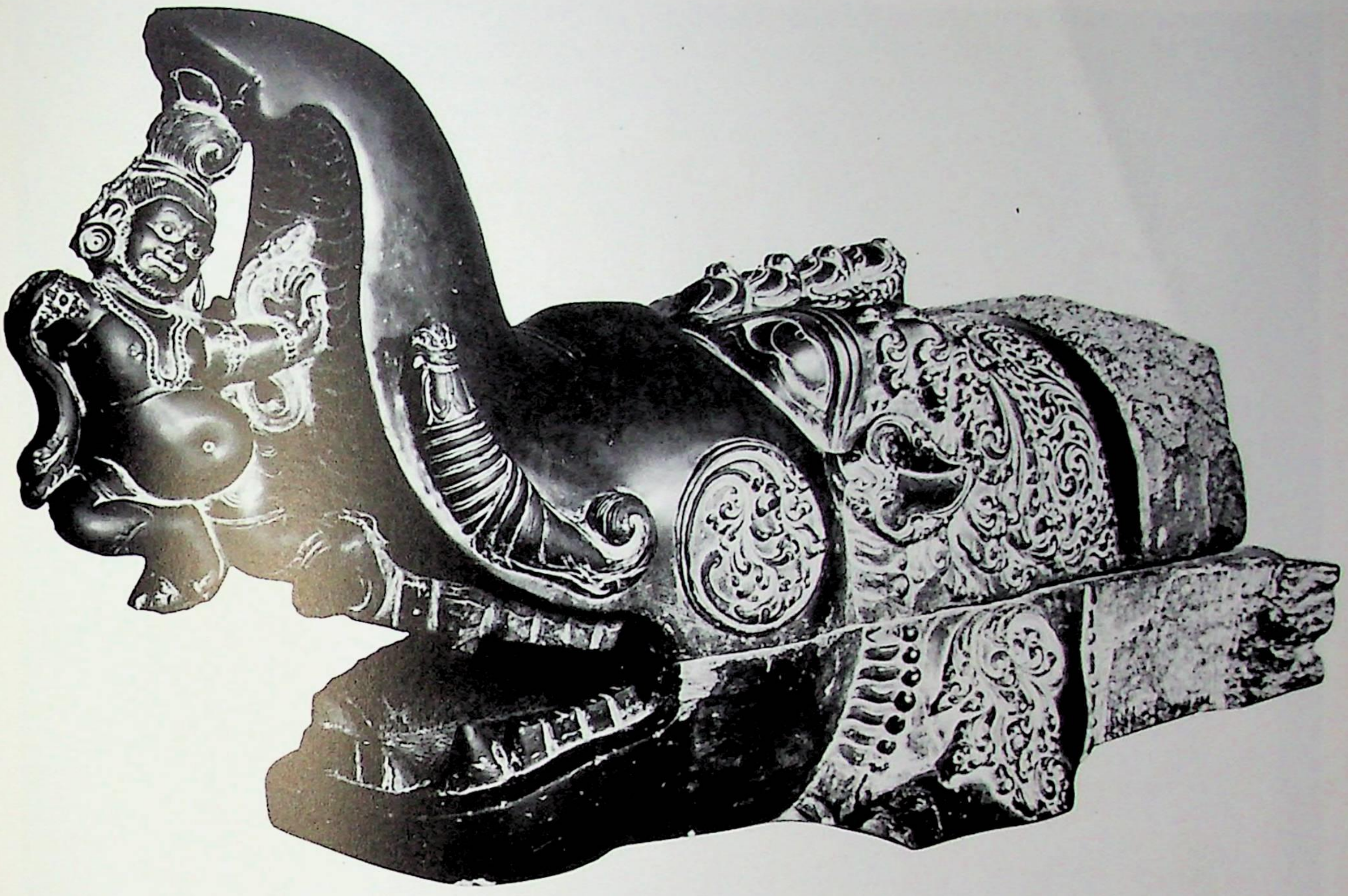
In the rendering of the episode, the painter uses the same setting as in the preceding work, but makes some changes. The *yoginis* have disappeared here, leaving only the emaciated goddess, whom we see twice. The temple of the goddess is substituted by that of Shiva; the river bank is also altered; in general terms, the work is far less crowded than the preceding leaf. It captures with even greater effect the sense of mystery that belongs to the story. The remarkable figure of the emaciated skeletal goddess, with her hideous face, elongated and strangely distorted torso, and dangling, shrivelled breasts, is superbly rendered. The darkness of the night and the almost noiseless proceedings make a wondrous effect. Significant details are the leopard-skin garment of the goddess, the crescent moon on her brow, and the third eye, all linking her with Shiva; the jackals appear as menacing scavengers. The disappearance of the raja into the water and then into the cauldron is indicated only by his crown, sword, and upper garment lying on a rock on the bank; finally, the untold blessings of this beggarlike goddess appear at the extreme left.

Apparently many a tale from this folk text was illustrated by the Pahari painter. Ananda Coomaraswamy drew attention to a leaf in the Boston Museum, and some drawings related to this series have been known for some time, but they have never properly been identified until now.

Literature

See No. 193.

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195

MAKARA GARGOYLE
Black stone
12th century; from Monghyr, Bihar
35 x 128 cm
Patna Museum, Patna, No. 13

Over the centuries the remarkable transformation of the simple aquatic creature, the *makara*, both sprang from and fed into the inventive turn of the Indian sculptor's mind. Now a symbol of fertility, now of auspiciousness, sometimes representing the mysteries of the deep, and sometimes the powers of nature to change its aspect quickly to subsume divergent elements, the *makara* was never far from the artist's imagination. As the vehicle of Varuna, the god of waters, or of Ganga, the river goddess, or as the emblem of Kama, the Indian god of love, the *makara* had many reasons to appear again and again in the area first of India and then of southeast Asia, combining the features of a crocodile, a fish, a reptile, and an elephant, almost at will.

As conceived by the Sena artist of the twelfth century, this *makara*, serving as a spout-ending, is made of an upper and a lower half joined horizontally. From its open mouth springs a small pot-bellied male "carved bilaterally, with the physiognomy of Bhairava or of Hayagriva," as he hangs on to one nostril of the fantastic creature and pushes his chignoned head against his trunk. The hind part of the piece is rough and uncarved; up to a certain point it must have fit into an opening in a roof high above. Its front part is greatly embellished with floral scrollwork and other devices that appear on its head, cheeks and trunk. The bulging eye is repeated several times, each time more decorative than before; the decorative patterns around the ears and on the neck assume the character now of flowing water, now of foliage tendrils, now flames that leap, spiral, and turn upon themselves. It would seem as if, in using this occasion to treat of a mythical monster that belongs to the realm of imagination, the artist decides to fully indulge his imagination.

Literature

P.L. Gupta, *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities*, Patna, 1965, pl. XIV, p. 129.

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196

THE UNVEILING OF DRAUPADI
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 4th quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
21 x 15.5 cms
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. 334

Among the many instances that one can cite when, without the slightest hint of an inscription, a connoisseur (*rasika*) can not only relate a painting to a theme but also recite a verse that interprets it exactly from memory, this simple but elegant painting is one example. Seemingly representing only a young lady standing with folded hands and a variety of garments curled around her feet, the *rasika* would know this work depicts Draupadi, wife of the Pandava brothers, heroes of the great epic, the *Mahabharata*. She has just figured in a miracle wrought by Krishna, friend of the Pandavas and a "brother" to her.

In the game of dice on which many events turn in the epic text, Draupadi was staked and lost by the eldest of the Pandavas to the rival Kaurvas who, piling a final ignominy upon their rivals, drag her into the court and attempt to disrobe her within sight of everyone assembled. In this dire strait, Draupadi thinks of Krishna and a miracle occurs. Her *sari*, being pulled by the villainous Dushasana, does not seem to end. As one *sari* finishes another begins, until Dushasana and the Kaurvas give up in despair. As one popular, tongue-twisting, and alliterative Hindi verse puts it, everyone wonders:

> *Sari Madh mari hai ki nari madh sari hai ki sari hai ki nari hai, ki sari-hun ki nari hai.*
> (Is this a woman clad in sari: or is the sari contained within the woman; is the whole thing a sari? or is it a woman? or, is it a woman who is nothing else but saris?)

The painter here eschews the dramatic part of the narrative and decides to make us witness to the event after it has occurred, Draupadi's honor having been saved. She stands here surrounded by the *saris*, hands folded to Krishna whom we do not see; along with her, we too feel something of the power of the *adbhuta* deed wrought by Krishna.

Literature

M.S. Randhawa, *Basohli Painting*, New Delhi, 1959; W.G. Archer, *Indian Painting from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Mankot; B.N. Goswamy, *The Bhagavata Paintings from Mankot*, 1978; Ibid, *et al.*, *Krishna the Divine Lover*, Lausanne, 1982; Francis Hutchins, *Young Krishna*, West Franklin, 1980.

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197

AN ARRANGEMENT WITH FOUR DEER
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st half of the 19th century
Indian Museum, Calcutta, No. 396/719

Playful and inventive, and in the final analysis raising questions about the nature of fantasy and appearances, motifs like this arrangement of four deer with one head serving four bodies are among the oldest in the history of art. While publishing a "four-deer" relief from Ajanta, Ananda Coomaraswamy drew attention to many motifs in early Asiatic art in which parallels could be found among Sumerian, Hittite, Assyrian, Mycenean, Achaemenian, and Scythian sculptures. He observed that the noted "four-deer" motif appeared:

> on a Chalcidean vase of the sixteenth century B.C., then on a capital of Cave I at Ajanta, in a Rajput drawing of the nineteenth century, and finally in southern India in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

The nineteenth century Rajput drawing that Coomaraswamy mentioned must have been quite close to this finished painting from the Pahari area. While it does not exhibit great skill as a work of art—the postures of the four deer are not very convincing and the receding landscape in the background introduces an incongruous element—this painting nonetheless bridges a chronological gap and keeps alive the memory of a visual pun. The landscape evidently suggested itself to the painter in the context of the animal whose habitat he decided to introduce as an additional element in a known but still arresting motif.

Literature

A.K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (Dover reprint), 1956, fig. 7.

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198

A CHIMERA
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 541

This creature of the imagination is born of the same fancy that the Indian artist has nursed across the centuries. No name can easily be assigned to it, and no two like creatures are ever encountered, for each artist dips into his own subconscious for these images which lie beyond the observed world. There is a long tradition of composite creatures made up of innumerable figures that come together and dovetail to form another well-defined figure, like that of a camel, elephant, or horse. But this chimera, padding its way along the edge of water, with its woman's head and tiger's body, and feet and tail in the form of lion heads, is of a different category. It is close in conception to the *navagunjara* often found in the art of Orissa, a composite of nine different animals and birds adored as a manifestation of Vishnu. People living in the hilly regions even today refer to this kind of creature as a *chhaleda*, mysterious, illusive, and beyond the realm of reality, visible one moment and invisible the next. The so-called curiosities of nature that circus companies still carry around with them, showing, for instance, the head of a woman artfully grafted to the body of an animal, are in appearance not far from this kind of chimera. The intent clearly is to evoke a sense of wonder and disbelief of the kind evoked by many impossible creatures described at such "scientific" length in al-Qazwini's *Ajaib-ul-Makhluqat* (Wonders of Creation), a perennial source for works of this category of visual innovation.

Literature
Published in *Chhavi I*, Benares, 1971, fig. 488.

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199

THE ASCETIC BOY AFTER HIS FIRST EXPERIENCE OF SEX
Red sandstone
2nd–3rd century; from Mathura, Uttar Pradesh
80 x 24 x 15 cm
Government Museum, Mathura, No. 00.J–7



This unusual figure from the railing pillar of a *stupa* is that of a young man lost in thought, clearly wondering about something while recalling it. Vogel described it as "a male figure of faunlike appearance," wearing an elaborate turban, necklaces of beads and other ornaments, standing under a mango tree in blossom.

It is not clear who this figure might represent, but it has been suggested that the person shown here is Rishyashring (literally, gazelle-horned), a boy ascetic of whom many stories are told in early literature. A Buddhist *jataka* tells this tale of the untouched boy living in a hermitage when he is approached and seduced by a young woman who takes advantage of his utter innocence. The ascetic, still somewhat confused, becomes aware for the first time of the delights of the body, never having known even about the existence of women before this experience. The mango tree above, the boss in front of the turban suggesting a horn is concealed therein, and the part princely, part ascetic appearance of the boy have led to this identification. The mood of wonder is very clear, the reverie in which the figure is lost being supported by the eloquent and in this case specially meaningful gesture of raising the right hand, with two extended fingers, to the lips.

The fragment is severely damaged, being broken at the top, where only a balcony railing is visible, and at the bottom. On the reverse of this pillar are three sunken panels carved in relief: at the top, a sacred tree with worshippers; in the middle, two seated male figures; the one at the bottom is nearly completely destroyed. Each of the scenes is set between two Persepolitan-Mauryan pilasters with their capitals in the form of single winged lions. At the sides are mortises for crossbars. An inscription in one line below the topmost panel reads: "Gift of Kathika, the servant of the inner palace." As is true of many other railing pillars, the quality of the carving on the reverse does not attain the level of the front balcony principal figure.

Literature

J.P. Vogel, *The Archaeological Museum at Mathura*, Calcutta, 1910.

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SHANTA: THE QUIESCENT SENTIMENT

शान्तरस

WHILE THE EARLIER classifications of *rasas* do not mention Shanta, later authorities accept it. Its enduring emotional state, *shama* or *nirveda*, is serenity. Its cause or determinant is "the emptiness or vanity of all things by reason of their not being lasting—or else it is the form of the supreme spirit—i.e., God—the only entity, in the opinion of the quietist." The enhancers of this mood are "holy hermitages, sacred places, places of pilgrimage, pleasant groves... the society of great men." Among the consequents are "horripilation," and the *vyabhicharibhavas* appropriate to it include "self-disparagement, joy, remembrance, resolve, kindness toward all beings...."

The fullness of this sentiment is seen in the *Mahabharata* in great measure, but a poetic passage cited as an illustration reads:

> When will the crow fearlessly carry away the food placed as alms in my joined hands as I move along the highway, wearing rags of a worn-out patched garment, looked at by the citizens in the road with fear, with curiosity, and with pity, sleeping in the unfeigned bliss of relishing the nectar of spirituality?

The rhetorician Mammata quotes another example in which a person detached from the world says: "Be it a serpent or a garland of flowers around my neck, be it a bed of roses or of stones.... I, possessed of equanimity, pass my days, uttering 'Shiva, Shiva.' "

In general, discussions of Shanta *rasa* centered around the philosophical question of how a state of mind that emphasizes detachment, withdrawal, can lead to an experience of the delight that is *rasa*. If Shanta is that "in which there is neither pain, nor pleasure, nor thought, nor hatred, nor affection, nor any desire," it would be illogical, it is asserted, for it to result in the kind of pleasure associated with the *rasa* experience. But this is countered by the argument that the pleasure derived from a contemplation of serenity is not of the same order as that which comes from the quelling of all desires, and hence does not interfere with it. Again, some discussion centers around the question whether this sentiment can be distinguished from the one that is Heroic in Mercy or the like. But it is generally agreed that Shanta is different from the Heroic in Mercy because it is "of a nature without egotism." Even when accepted as a *rasa*, some writers raise doubts about Shanta's appropriateness in the context of theater. Thus Kulapati, for example, says that a *rasika* or *sahradaya* indifferent to the world feels no desire to witness a drama, fearing it should disturb his equanimity. But this objection is easily met by others who state that a *rasika* has not himself renounced the world and become free of all desires. He is one who is capable of apprehending and experiencing that emotion.

In sculpture and painting, images of deities and great men seen in a state of complete equanimity, withdrawal, occur in impressive numbers. The lotuslike detachment of the Buddha seated in contemplation, the "tieless" character of a Jina, the figure of Shiva seated in *samadhi*, are obvious subjects for the sculptor and painter. Serenity is the essence of such images. But sculptors and painters frequently go beyond renderings of single figures in contemplation and detachment, and also treat scenes in hermitages and quiet surroundings while communicating a feeling, a mood, in which *shama* dominates.

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THE GLORY OF VISHNU
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century
22 x 17 cm
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, No. 422



There are countless paintings illustrating the Shanta aspect of Vishnu the Preserver, but it is his Sheshashayi form that the painter often chooses, showing him lying recumbent on the great cosmic snake floating on the waters of eternity. In that setting Brahma also appears, perched on the lotus which proceeds from Vishnu's navel, while Lakshmi, Vishnu's consort, sits at his feet and massages them. The scene is dominated by the coils and countless hoods of Shesha. Here, however, the painter makes a distinct departure. Without any question, the glory of Vishnu is the subject of the work, but we see him seated cross-legged, all by himself, on a large open lotus of pristine whiteness. His attributes are all accurate and complete: Vishnu is four-armed and blue-complexioned; he carries the familiar conch shell, the discus, the mace, and a lotus flower; his *dhoti* is his favorite yellow color, and he wears a long garland around his neck. But the visual interest truly begins just around the figure, for an oval nimbus, really an aureole of golden rays, frames Vishnu. This oval shape is repeated again in an outer frame placed in the middle of a rectangular leaf, with floral spandrels at the four corners. The entire ground of the oval is in brilliant gold that shines and shimmers when the painting is moved even slightly.

The painter makes diverse discreet suggestions. The full-blown white lotus draws attention to the Narayana aspect of Vishnu and establishes his connection with the primeval waters; the oval format almost certainly appears because it has the shape of Hiranyagarbha, the golden womb, or the cosmic egg; the gold is emblematic of the richness that permeates the very idea of Vishnu. This is not just a pretty picture; the painter has put a great deal of thought into it, attempting to capture the tranquil essence of Vishnu, the first principle of life, the mover of all that is, the still center of the universe.

Literature

Bharat Kala Bhavan Ka Suchipatra, Varanasi, 1945, No. 55.

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201

MAITREYA, BUDDHA OF THE FUTURE
Red sandstone
2nd century; from Ramnagar/Ahicchhattra
66 x 24 x 11 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 59.530/1

This nimbate figure of Maitreya, promising freedom from fear, is cast in the mold of those powerful *yakshas* of old, but while it has energy and vitality, it also has an aspect of great softness, of warmth. The body is sculpted to convey a certain assertiveness, seen in the way the legs are spread slightly, each bearing its weight, but the smile that hovers on the lips and lights up the face brings the figure close within the devotee viewer's reach. The smooth planes of the torso, especially the pit of the navel, are rendered with great sensitivity, the sculptor taking evident delight in contrasting the bare upper part with the swirls and loops of the garment worn around the lower limbs. But the principal concern of the artist is to create a calming effect on the viewer.

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VISHNU IN MEDITATION
Sandstone
11th century; from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
45 cm
Archaeological Museum, Khajuraho, No. 125



To the question sometimes asked in the *Puranas* as to why the gods have to meditate, a variety of answers is offered. One proposes that the gods meditate because it is through meditation that the world order is maintained. If things are to remain in place and a certain balance is to prevail, even the highest of the gods must bring their powers to a point of concentration. It is also stated that the gods meditate for they must set the example of self-discipline, asserting the power of mind over matter.

Vishnu the Preserver, when seen alone, is usually conceived as reclining on Shesha, the cosmic serpent, but here he is sitting cross-legged like any other devotee, body erect and firm, eyes focused on the tip of the nose in the manner of a *yogi*, his breathing controlled. In this *yoga asana*, Vishnu also raises the index finger of his front left hand to his lower lip, suggesting the highest of concentration and placing him thus in the category of a Mauna-vratin, "one who is under the vow of silence." His emblems are now broken; only the discus held aloft in the rear left hand is intact. A fragment of the mace held at right is visible; these two suffice to identify the figure as Vishnu. The minor figures around the deity are broken or damaged; flying *vidyadharas* with garlands, seated or standing female attendants on either side, the decorative nimbus with its open petals contained within a broad circular double-beaded ring, all are details secondary to the elegant, youthful, serene figure of Vishnu, who remains the focus of attention.

Literature

J.N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1956, pl. XXIV; Krishna Deva and V.S. Nayal, *The Archaeological Museum at Khajuraho*, New Delhi, 1980, pl. VI.

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203

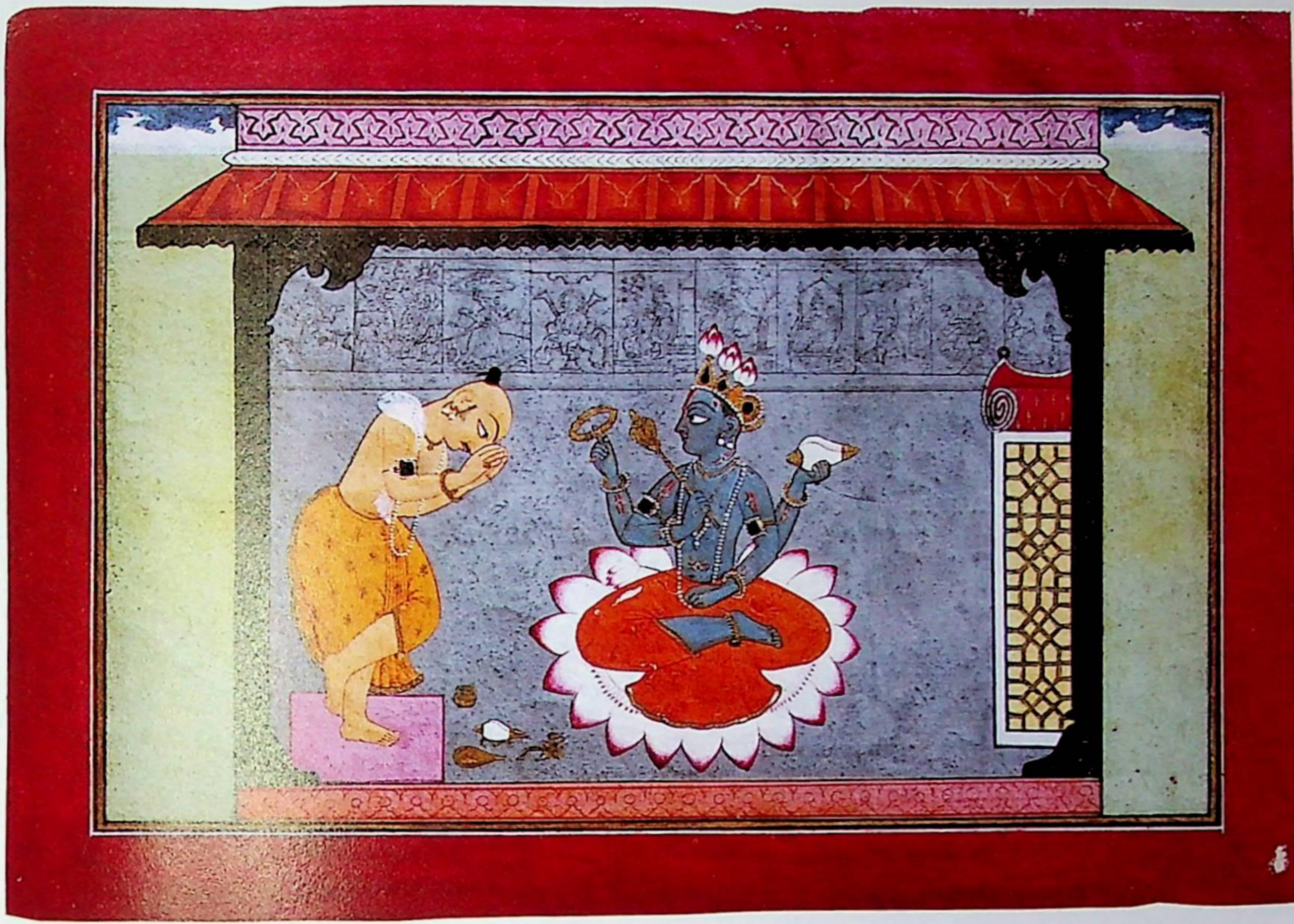
THE GODS AND SAGES BESEECH VISHNU TO INCARNATE HIMSELF
From the same *Bhagavata Purana* series as No. 51
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 18th century; from the family workshop of Seu-Nainsukh
22.5 x 30.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 58.18/1

In the cycles of time, a point was reached when there was an excess of evil on earth. This time Kamsa, king of Mathura, was the oppressor and even the patient goddess Earth was no longer able to bear such indignities and suffering. Driven to desperation, in the form of a cow she approached the gods who, powerless against Kamsa, decided to go to the edge of the Kshirasagara, the Milky Ocean, in order to beseech Vishnu the Serene to come to their rescue. Upholding his promise to mankind that he would descend to the earth whenever there was need to restore the balance between good and evil, Vishnu granted them the assurance they sought. Vishnu would incarnate himself yet again, this time as Krishna, nephew to Kamsa, and would destroy the king.

This leaf from the justly celebrated *Bhagavata Purana* series, painted by a member of the Seu-Nainsukh family, neatly separates the area of agitation from that of serenity. There is anxiety and anticipation on the faces of the gods who have gathered: four-headed Brahma, Shiva the ascetic, Indra the thousand-eyed, even Vishnu in another emanation, and on the faces of the *rishis* and Brahmins as well. The almost human beseeching look in the eyes of the cow catches the essence of the situation. Contrasted with this is the still, quiescent aspect of Vishnu as he lies in the Milky Ocean on his Shesha-serpent couch: blue-complexioned, four-armed, wearing his favorite yellow garment, with the ever faithful Lakshmi sitting close to his feet massaging them. In a voice "deep as the ocean," Vishnu speaks to the gods in answer to their prayers. His very presence soothes them. All agitation stops and the gods and sages, completely reassured, return to their own abodes to wait for the descent of Vishnu.

Literature
See No. 51.

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THE POET JAYADEVA BOWS TO VISHNU
From the same *Gita Govinda* series as No. 46
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Pahari, dated 1730
20 x 30.8 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. I–28

In the *Gita Govinda*, the celebration of the love of Radha and Krishna in all its frank passion is prefaced by Jayadeva with an elaborate, eloquent homage to the true nature of Krishna, who is none other than Vishnu, primal and cosmic man. He celebrates all ten incarnate forms assumed by Vishnu in wonderfully compact verses that capture the essence of each occasion on which Vishnu-Krishna decided to descend to earth. The verse form, *stuti*, is a song of praise and also one of the earliest statements of the number and sequence of the god's ten incarnations, which came to be accepted later. "In seas that rage as the aeon of chaos collapses," Vishnu takes the form of a fish; when the earth needs him and "clings to the tip of his tusk," he is the boar, and so on. Then, having sung of all these ten incarnations, Jayadeva puts them all together in a single stanza, summarizing Vishnu's valorous deeds of protection:

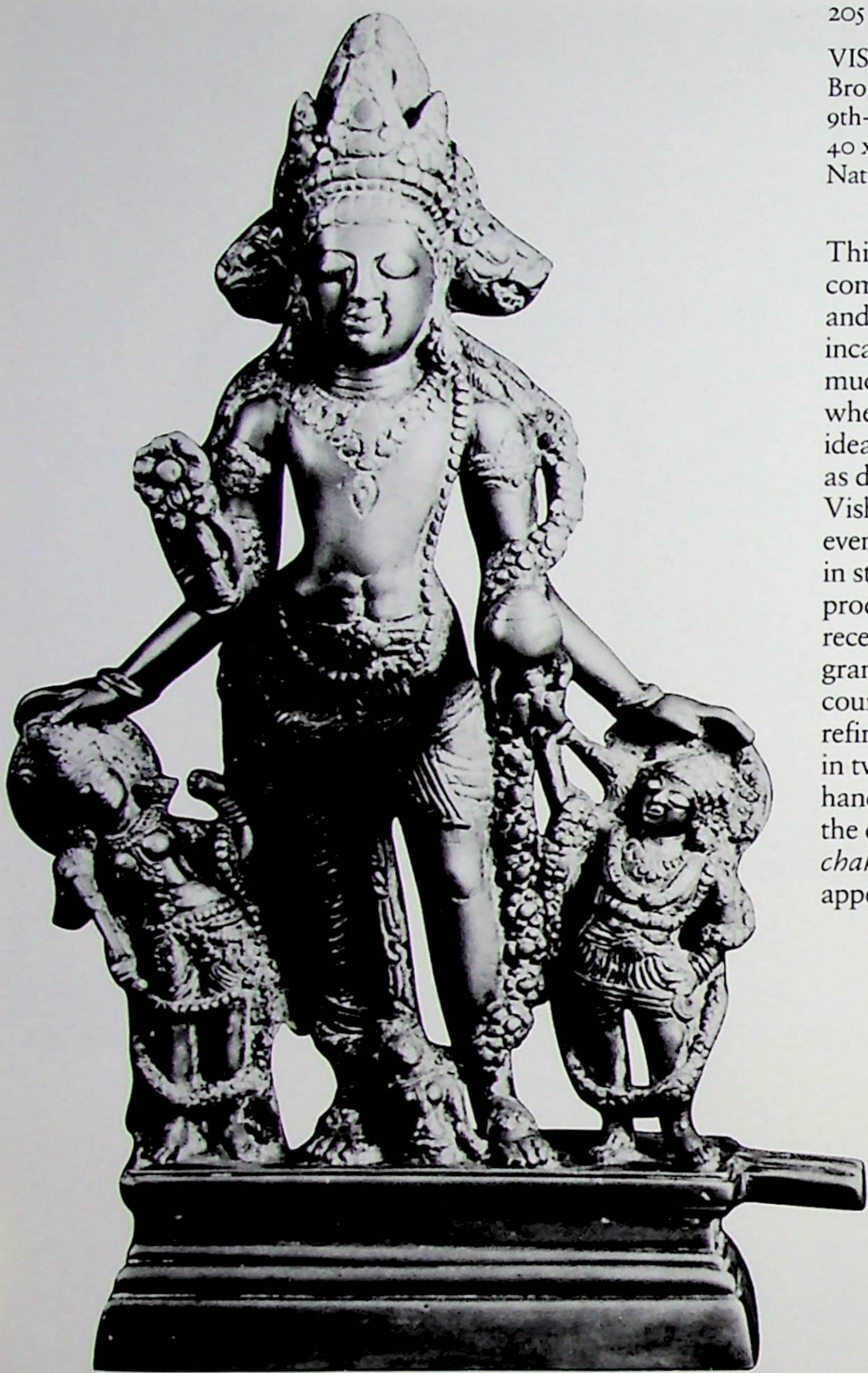
For upholding the Vedas,
For supporting the earth,
For raising the world,
For tearing the demon asunder,
For deceiving Bali,
For destroying the warrior-class,
For wielding the plough,
For spreading compassion,
For routing the barbarians,
Homage to you, Krishna,
In your ten incarnate forms:
(I.16)

Manaku made each incarnation the subject of a separate, resonant painting, a circumstance not fully realized earlier, for the incarnation pictures of this series were for some time considered to be from a different set, and were even dated differently. The artist solves the problem of simultaneously treating these manifold representations rather ingeniously, by showing Vishnu in his normal four-armed form prominently in the center while delineating in very fine drawings the sequence of the ten *avataras* on the back wall of the chamber in the background. There we see them in their proper sequence: fish, tortoise, boar, Narasimha, dwarf, Parasurama, Rama, Balarama, Buddha, and Kalki.

The very picture of devotion, bare-bodied, head bowed, legs crossed and hands folded, Jayadeva stands at left, with the implements of worship placed before the lotus-seat of Vishnu who sits there, blessing the poet who wrote "this perfect invocation" that joyously "evokes the essence of existence."

Literature
See No. 46.

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205

VISHNU-VAIKUNTHAMURTI
Bronze
9th-10th century; from Kashmir
40 x 26 x 11.5 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 80.1210

This unusual epiphanous aspect of Vishnu, combining four heads including that of a boar and a lion (reminiscent of two of his best-known incarnations), and the angry Kapila (at the back), is much loved of the craftsmen of Kashmir, the land where this iconography seems to have originated. The ideas behind it are complex, and the *vyuha* doctrine, as distinct from that of avatars or incarnations of Vishnu, is alluded to here. Despite its complex and even obscure references, the Kashmiri artist, working in stone or bronze, turned to it again and again, producing some magnificent works. This rather recently discovered bronze does not attain the grandeur or the fineness of some of its better-known counterparts, but it has great integrity and much refinement of workmanship. The great deity carries in two hands a lotus and a conch shell; the two other hands rest on his other two emblems, the mace and the discus, in the form of the *gada-devi* and the *chakra-purusha*, while the earth goddess Bhudevi appears between Vishnu's feet.

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THE ADORATION OF NARASIMHA
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 1st quarter of the 19th century; from a Kangra workshop
50 x 38.8 cm
Collection of Mr. C.L. Bharany, New Delhi, No. 3217

In an uncommon rendering, the Pahari painter of this work shows us the benign, soft aspect of Narasimha, Vishnu's incarnation, his fourth in a series of ten. Here Narasimha does not breathe fire and anger. The killing of Hiranyakashipu the demon-king (see No. 121) is behind him; here he is completely identified with Vishnu. He sits four-armed, cross-legged, with Lakshmi on his lap, on the coils of the great thousand-headed serpent Shesha, whom we ordinarily see on the waves of the Milky Ocean that is Vishnu's abode in the intervals between cosmic dissolution and creation. The serpent rests on an enormous lotus, which in turn rests on a gem-studded, hexagonal throne placed in a beautiful pavilion with a curving roof.

Around Narasimha and Lakshmi are ranged the greatest of the gods paying homage: Brahma the Creator, Vishnu with his mount Garuda, Shiva, Surya, and Chandra, each identified through different-colored nimbuses. Behind the pavilion is a stylized curving row of trees and flowering shrubs, and in front, two tall golden stands, possibly incense burners. But what catches the eye is the mystic diagram with its concentric circles of lotus-leaf patterns and the two intersecting triangles that make up the symbol of Shri in the diagram's heart. Clearly this is *yantra*, and what we are seeing in this painting is a Tantric form of Narasimha.

The workmanship is delicate. Some features, such as the hoods of Shesha, are rendered more imaginatively than others, although the painting as a whole does not possess the easy fluency of the earlier work from those Guler and Kangra ateliers. Of great interest is the manner in which a dread image becomes gentle on other occasions. When the intent changes, so does the treatment.

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207

HEAD OF THE BUDDHA
Chunar sandstone
5th century; from Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
27 x 20 x 16 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 47.20

Perhaps the most beautiful Buddha head that has survived in India, this work of near perfection, along with a few others of its kind, can be related to descriptions of the moment when the Buddha attained his enlightenment, *sambodhi*. The Buddha himself was to recall many years later, when speaking of that precise moment to the dearest of his disciples: "My mind was liberated, ignorance vanished, knowledge was acquired, darkness melted away, light sprang out."

It is this state of inner awareness that one glimpses in an image of this order. This head bears all the iconographical features that mark the Buddha with the exception of the *urna*, that little whorl of hair on the forehead between the eyebrows: the elongated ears, the curls of hair spiraling toward the right in the direction of the sun, the cranial protuberance (*ushnisha*). But it is not its iconography that gives significance to such an image: rather, it is the light that glows from within it.

With remarkable skill and great delicacy of feeling, the sculptor has fashioned these eyes which bend and dip and again tip upwards, conveying that feeling of gentleness and compassion, and only the barest indication of eyebrows, so soft is the modeling around this area. With their crisp, precise outlines, the lips carry that air of benign calm which one naturally associates with the Buddha. One could say that the face is almost too soft, lacking that robust confidence of the work of Mathura; realizing this, perhaps, the sculptor stops just a breath short of making it too sweet. The smile is knowing, and the aspect gentle, not effeminate.

The head must have once belonged to the type of standing or seated figures of the Buddha found in a few examples in the Archaeological Museum at Sarnath and the Indian Museum at Calcutta. It is appropriate that this entire group comes from Sarnath, that sacred site outside of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, for it was here that the Buddha spoke to his first disciples in that voice "deep as the rumble of clouds," setting the wheel of law into motion.

Literature

Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, London, 1955, pl. 50; M. Hallade, *Inde*, Fribourg, 1968, fig. 143; *Ancient Sculptures of India*, Tokyo, 1984, No. 42; Pramod Chandra, *The Sculpture of India 3000 B.C.–1300 A.D.*, Washington D.C., 1985, No. 29.

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208

STANDING BUDDHA
Sandstone
5th century; from Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh
102 x 52 x 23 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 59.527/2



In the Gupta period to which this imposing, subtly realized figure belongs, a very special feeling seems to be imparted to images of the Buddha. It is as if in the mind of the sculptor, the idea and the image had finally coalesced. This comes across not only in works from major workshops such as those at Sarnath and Mathura, but even from relatively obscure sites. The material again seems to be no obstacle, for terracottas as well as stone are capable of capturing that inner light which one associates with Buddha images. Here is yet another distinguished work in the hand of a Gupta master: the weight of the body from this near life-sized figure cannot be felt at all. One is struck by the spirit informing the figure, that sense of quiet withdrawal, of total and unmoving equilibrium. Many things contribute to the effect: the gaze fixed at the tip of the nose, the fuller lower lip, the slightly dimpled corners of the mouth, the smooth body unadorned, but for the folds of the invisible garment around the neck and the waist from which a delicate loop hangs down.

The hands of this image of the Buddha, now unfortunately broken, must have been held in *mudras* of reassurance and boon-granting.

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209

HEAD OF THE BUDDHA
Terracotta
5th century; from Uttar Pradesh, exact provenance unknown
State Museum, Lucknow, No. 67.15

This remarkable head comes quite close in feeling to the finest of the Gupta period Buddha heads in stone, such as those from Sarnath. There are many things in common: the general outline of the face, the extremely sensitive treatment of planes, especially in the area of the eyes, the fine articulation of the lips, the stylized treatment of the clockwise curls that cover the *ushnisha*. A wonderful sense of calm lights up the head, as if from within. A quiet smile plays round the lips, while the gaze of the half-closed eyes turns inward. One sees the Buddha here truly as "awakened," at peace with himself and with the outside world, even with the knowledge that the world is little else than *dukha*, pain. In one single respect, this head of the Buddha departs from the much better-known sculptured heads and figures of this very period: the face is much more youthful, like that of a young adult, innocent and untouched. This head (there are not many of this kind in terracotta) evidently comes from a life-size image of the Buddha, and can be seen as coming at the high point of a long tradition of work in this medium and style.

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210

SEATED BODHISATTVA
Bronze
Inscribed on the pedestal in Sarada script
4th quarter of the 10th century; from Kashmir
25.5 x 18 cm
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 2986

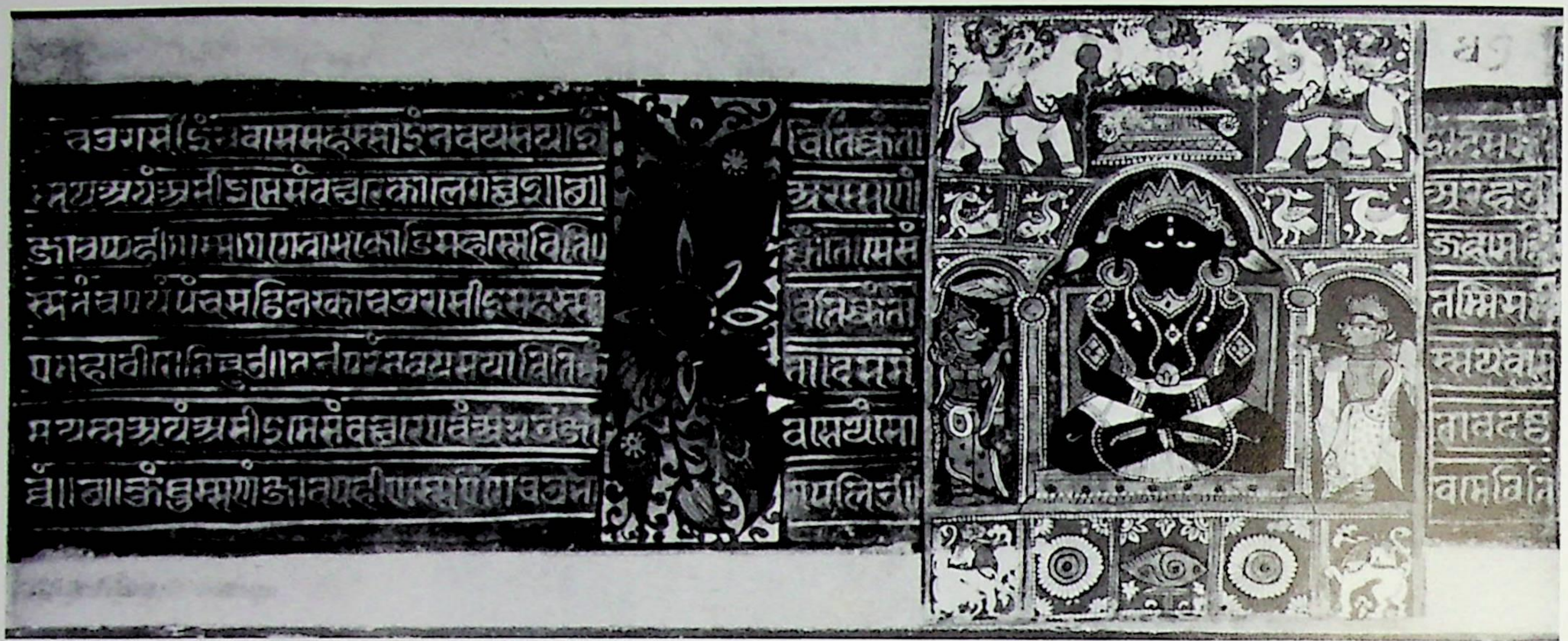
The *bodhisattva* Avalokiteshvara, ever engaged in his chosen task of alleviating suffering, often sits thoughtfully immersed in concern over the human condition and sheds grace on his devotees. In his Tantric form, which obtained a measure of popularity in Kashmir and further north, he was known as Sugatisandarsana Lokeshvara, and it is thus that we see him in this celebrated bronze from Kashmir. Six-armed, he is meant to carry, according to the text, a rosary, a lotus, a water vessel, and a staff, while holding two of his hands in the gestures of boon-granting and fearlessness; he sits in *lalitasana* on the familiar double lotus, very sharply delineated. His lower garment is a *dhoti*, and the upper an elegantly draped *uttariya*. An image is set within his locks and adorned with rich and sumptuous jewelry, and he wears an expression indicating peace but also a certain withdrawal. On either side of the elaborately carved drum supporting the lotus are seated his two consorts, Bhrikuti with three eyes, and Tara. The group is arranged on a pedestal; at its base is the well-known dedicatory inscription in Sarada script which gives one of the few firm dates in the history of Kashmiri bronzes, since the reign of Queen Didda (A.D. 980-1003) is specifically referred to.

There is a marked difference between the treatment of the figure of the *bodhisattva* and of the two consorts, for the minor figures are far less accomplished. But this summary treatment of the minor figures appears much more prominently in a remarkably similar and elegant Avalokiteshvara in this Tantric form, perhaps of a somewhat earlier date. That image, published by Mary Lanius from the Pan-Asian Collection, omits the consorts but adds an elaborate aureole, now slightly broken.

Literature

R.C. Kak, *Handbook of Archaeological and Numismatic Sections of the Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar*, Calcutta, 1923, pp. 68, 70-71; Mary Lanius, "A Kashmiri Bodhisattva Related to the Queen Didda Bronze," *Archives of Asian Art*, XXII, 1968–69, pp. 102-103; Pratapaditya Pal, *Bronzes of Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 144-148.

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211

THE ADORATION OF A JINA
From a *Kalpasutra* manuscript, folio 28 *(recto)*
Gouache on paper
Western India, 1439; from Mandu, Madhya Pradesh
10 x 7.4 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 49.175

The adoration or lustration of a *jina*, conqueror, "he who takes one across the ford" of human existence, predictably forms a recurring theme in illustrated *Kalpasutra* manuscripts. Here one sees the lustration of Mahavira, the last of the Tirthankaras, on Mount Meru. His divinity is established in many ways, even as he is taken into the lap of Indra who sits cross-legged on the mountain. On either side stand divine figures holding vessels from which water is pouring on the holy one. In the sky, bulls symbolizing rain clouds pour forth from their horns streams of water onto the sacred figure of the *jina.* The intention behind introducing this theme rather repetitively within the manuscript is to focus on the divine status of the Tirthankara in the context of the story of his life: the conception, the transfer of the embryo, birth, growing up, renunciation and enlightenment. It is through highly stylized but very clearly conceived images of this kind that the essence of the Tirthankara and his "all-conquering" nature is established.

This leaf belongs to the celebrated dated *Kalpasutra* from Mandu which figures so prominently in all discussions of Jaina or Western Indian painting. It is among the more sumptuous manuscripts of its kind, representing certain stylistic innovations while using well-established conventions like the projecting eye, the two-thirds profile, flat colored backgrounds, highly mannered gestures, strong interest in textiles, and a peculiar facial type. The illustration is horizontal in format and occupies the middle of a page, as is common among such manuscripts.

Literature

Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, "A Consideration of an Illustrated MS from Mandapadurga (Mandu) dated 1439 A.D." *Lalit Kala*, no.6, 1959, pl. 3, fig. 11; J.P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India,* London, 1982, p. 28.

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212

EKAMUKHA SHIVALINGA
Stone
5th century, Uchahara, Uttar Pradesh
94 x 25 x 23 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 76.223



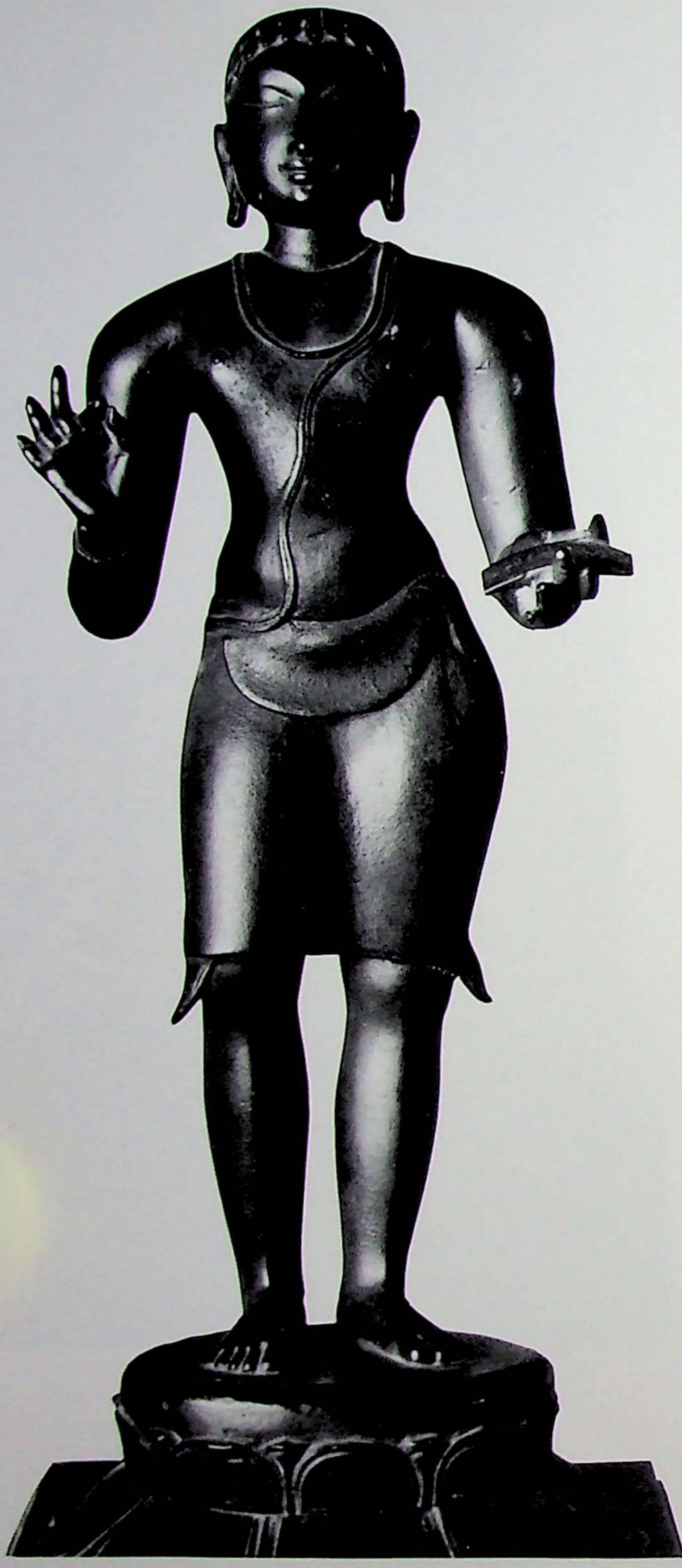
Among the best known *ekamukha shivalingas* (aniconic phallic emblems of Shiva with the god's face carved on one side), this remarkable work from the Uchahara region expresses the Indian concept of rendering the immanent as manifest. The face of Shiva, quietly radiant with inner peace, soothes and reassures the devotee. The decorative elements of the simple necklace, the hair piled high and streaming to the shoulders where it rests lightly, and the pearl earrings contribute to an introspective mood, enhanced by the deep set eyes and the protruding lower lip. The crescent moon in Shiva's matted locks may have been intended by the sculptor as a symbol of "the cosmic mind of the Creator," as the *Rig Veda* explains it; or as V.S. Agrawala put it, the moon may represent "an orderly fluctuation of light and darkness manifesting the brightness of creation and the invisibility of its withdrawal."

This *linga* is quite close in feeling to the wonderful Khoh *linga* (now in the Allahabad Museum), and displays some of the excellent qualities associated with the classical art of the Guptas: a fine sense of restraint, and a careful balance between expressive power and idealized abstraction.

Literature

V.S. Agrawala, "A Survey of Gupta Art and Some Sculptures from Nachna Kuthara and Khoh," *Lalit Kala*, no. 9, 1961, pp. 16–26; *Ancient Sculptures of India*, Tokyo, 1984, no. 47.

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213

THE SAINT MANIKKAVACHAKA
Bronze
13th century; from Tamil Nadu
50.7 x 22 cm
National Museum, New Delhi, No. 57.16.3

In the adoration of Shiva stands a whole range of saints, each celebrated in the south of India for his own qualities, each connected by a different legend to the god, but utterly immersed in him. One knows thus of Chandesha, who did not spare his own father when he interfered with his worship of Shiva; of Sambandar, the poet-saint who was nourished by Parvati's own milk; of Appar, who devoted all his life to removing the grass that rudely grew between the stones in the pavement of Shiva temples. This relatively small but quietly affecting image is that of another of these great saints, the celebrated Manikkavachaka, who goes back to the late seventh and early eighth century and who was a minister at the southern court of the Pandyan kings. Manikkavachaka renounced worldly life early, however, for he realized one day that "Shiva had taken over his mind as his shrine, his body as his dwelling." As Kramrisch says, "Shiva had given himself to his saint; Manikkavachaka had nothing else to give the god."

Manikkavachaka is shown here, as a "minstrel of the god," holding in his left hand an open leaf from a palm-leaf manuscript, perhaps the justly celebrated *Tiruvachakam*, on which the invocation "Obeisance to Shiva" is inscribed; the right hand is held in the gesture (*mudra*) of holding forth, of "instruction by silence." As befits a recluse, the saint wears no jewelry, no ornaments: a small string around the neck and a sinuously curling sacred thread are all that he carries besides the simple loincloth elegantly draped around his middle. But this gives the sculptor the opportunity to render without distraction the smooth elegance of the saint's withdrawn, serene form. An unearthly calm surrounds the figure; the sculptor expresses his clear conviction that the saint was touched by the grace of Shiva.

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214

SHIVA, LORD OF GNOSIS
Bronze
11th century; from Tamil Nadu
10 cm
Collection of Mr. D. Natesan, Bangalore

Shiva is not only the great destroyer or the lord of dance, he is also the greatest of teachers, the supreme *guru*. As the giver of knowledge who instructs all sentient beings, whether gods, sages, *siddhas*, or common mortals, he is represented in what are called Dakshinamurti images. When represented as conferring knowledge in the field of the arts, especially music, the sculptor portrays him as Vinadhara Dakshinamurti; on occasions when he is imparting *jnana*, gnosis, he is referred to as Jnana Dakshinamurti. In this role, he sits on a high seat, one leg often shown resting on the ground, the other bent at the knee and brought across to rest on the knee opposite. The posture is erect, the face serene and illumined with perfect knowledge, with one hand in the gesture of imparting *jnana*. Frequently *rishis* with matted locks, seers in their own right, are shown sitting at Shiva's feet, as if gathered to receive as much knowledge as they can. They appear in attitudes of adoration or admiration, for every word that falls from his lips contains the essence of the wisdom of all ages, past, present and future.

Dakshinamurti images range from monumental to extremely small, the latter almost certainly for devotees to carry them while moving from place to place. One can visualize a devotee setting up a small shrine each morning, at home or on a journey.

This tiny bronze, conceived on a monumental scale, shows Shiva seated on his high pedestal in the manner described. He is four-armed, but one of the left arms is now broken. The upper right arm holds a serpent and the lower right arm is held in front in the gesture of imparting wisdom. The head is covered with matted locks which stream down and curl elegantly at the ends, covering the shoulders. The form is extremely tightly modeled, the suggestion of resilient, youthful flesh being very strong. The face commands unusual attention with its expression of total, unruffled calm. Just below the seat at the foot of the little "hill" sit two *rishis*, one on either side. Shiva's right foot rests on the crouching form of the Apasmara Purusha, suppressing this demon of forgetfulness.



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A DEITY SEATED IN A CHANDRASHALA
Sandstone
5th century; from Bhumara, Madhya Pradesh
40 x 60 cm
Archaeological Museum, Sanchi, No. 2923

In the circular space inside an elaborate, delicately carved architectural fragment is seated a three-headed (four-headed?), four-armed figure, legs crossed, on a large lotus. The heads, at once youthful and serene, are topped by matted locks piled high; the elongated torso, bare and resilient, is adorned with a tiger skin worn across it in the manner of a sacred thread. The lower part of the body is dressed in a *dhoti* held at the waist by a delicately carved girdle, and around the knees is tied a scarf (*yogapatta*), which holds the legs in place and which many ascetics wear as they sit in this position for hours. Two of the arms are broken, making the identification of the figure problematic; the two intact hands hold a bow and a full-blown lotus with a long stem. The lotus seat is ingeniously arranged, for it takes the curvature of the lower part of the circular frame. It is possible that the figure is a composite of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (Harihara-Pitamaha), but this can only remain a suggestion in the absence of any clearer indication. R.D. Banerji identified it tentatively as Brahma. The ascetic quality of the figure comes across clearly despite all the damage it has suffered. The figure is relatively unadorned, but is set neatly in the circular space edged by ornamental detail—the beads, the scrolls, the curlicues all merging to form a rich, lively pattern. This architectural fragment (*chandrashala*) is far more elaborately carved than others which also belonged, like the present piece, to the temple of Shiva that was cleared and excavated in 1920 east of the village of Bhumara (formerly in Nagod State). A number of fine pieces from Bhumara are now in the Allahabad Museum; it is not known how this *chandrashala* came to be added to the collection of the Archaeological Museum at Sanchi.

Literature

R.D. Banerji, "The Temple of Shiva at Bhumara," *Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 16, Calcutta, 1924, pl. XII(b).

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216

A RAJA AT PRAYER
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 2nd quarter of the 19th century
Allahabad Museum, Allahabad, No. 312

Away from the city that serves as the capital of his kingdom, on a secluded green patch of land nestling in a bend of a river, a raja sits alone at his prayers under a tree. Beneath him is a small piece of carpet; the raja is clad in a *dhoti* and the upper part of his body is bare except for a scarf loosely draped over his left shoulder; in his right hand he holds open a small prayer book, which he has taken out of a silken wrap that lies close to his crossed legs. His body is erect and firm, and his gaze is fixed not at the book of prayers, but straight ahead, the suggestion possibly being that he is contemplating the meaning of a verse from the text that he holds. The objects of the raja's adoration are the *shalagramas* (sacred ammonite stones) placed on a small golden throne directly in front of his seat. A conch shell, fruit, flower garlands, and metal implements of worship are scattered on the grass nearby; prominently visible are the wooden clogs the raja removed before sitting down to pray.

There is a remarkable peace in the environment. The painter makes a special effort to focus on the seclusion and the quietness of the spot chosen by the raja, far away from the bustle of his capital city. It is as if he needs to keep his own center firm, as an ideal king should. Quite naturally, the painter emphasizes what he sets out to say, taking all kinds of liberties with appearances, manipulating, condensing, or enlarging space to suit his pictorial requirements.

The raja is difficult to identify, but is possibly Gulab Singh of Jammu, the founder of the Dogra dynasty and known to be a great devotee of Vishnu and a worshipper of *shalagrama*. There is some facial resemblance between this depiction and other portraits of Gulab Singh. But since the artist's intent is not to render a portrait—he wishes only to focus on the atmosphere of quietness and peace—it is not easy to establish beyond doubt the raja's identity.

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217

SAGES IN CONVERSATION
From a *Devi Mahatmya* series
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Pahari, dated 1781
16.5 x 24.1 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. E–144

The exploits of the Devi as related in the *Markandeya Purana* are long and involved, but the story is prefaced by and interspersed with passages of affecting quietness. In keeping with a long tradition, the story is told in a "boxed" format—that is, one person narrates to another who, during the discourse, asks a question; the answer to it is given in the form of still another episode framed in the narrative format as being heard or recited by yet another pair, and so on. This is what happens, for instance, in the *Bhagavata Purana* when the narrators and listeners in the sequence of episodes keep changing without the original framework being completely lost.

Here, in an early leaf of a *Devi Mahatmya* series from the *Markandeya Purana*, the painter, who might have belonged to a Guler workshop, shows a sage expounding to a younger person, also a devotee, but one who has set out to seek and receive knowledge from those older and wiser than himself. The older, grey-bearded sage is none other than Markandeya. As befits his status, he sits on a deer skin, holding and wearing several bead strings, his body emaciated with age but his posture erect, one firm hand in a gesture of expounding. The dark-bearded devotee seated before him, possibly his disciple Kraushtiki, holds his hands in obeisance in a gesture of receiving. The setting is a quiet forest, beside a lotus pond, with a profusion of trees and little distraction. The painter has aimed at communicating two dominant impressions: the peaceful, soothing atmosphere of this corner, and the knowing expression on the face of Markandeya, for he is a *rishi*, a seer who can penetrate the mystery of things.

In starting with a leaf of such quietness, it would seem as if the painter were preparing himself and us for the tumult of action that follows in the text, in which the Devi springs into prolonged and fierce action against demons.

Twenty-two paintings of this series are in the Chandigarh Museum, and another thirty-four in the Lahore Museum. The last painting bears a colophon with the date V.S. 1938 (= A.D. 1781).

Literature

V.S. Agrawala, *Devi Mahatmya: The Glorification of the Great Goddess*, Varanasi, 1963; W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Guler, No. 17 (i), (r); F.S. Aijazuddin, *Pahari Paintings and Sikh Portraits in the Lahore Museum*, London, 1977, *s.v.* Guler, Nos. 41 (i) to 41 (xxxiv).

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218

THE HERMITAGE OF THE SAGE MEDHA
From the same *Devi Mahatmya* series as No. 217
On verso, Sanskrit verses
Gouache on paper
Pahari, dated 1781
16.5 x 24.1 cm
Chandigarh Museum, Chandigarh, No. E-147

As Markandeya says, the story of the great exploits of the Devi was narrated in resounding detail by the sage Medha to King Suratha and his companion, the *vaishya* or merchant Samadhi. The king and the merchant had both fallen upon bad days. The king, having lost his kingdom and his family, was wandering disconsolately in the forest when he chanced upon the hermitage (*ashram*) of the great *rishi* Medha. Such was the peace in the atmosphere around the hermitage that fierce animals lived there in quietude, having given up their natural aggression. There the *rishi*'s disciples busied themselves with total devotion to the learning they had come to seek from their *guru*. So drawn was the king to the peaceful atmosphere that he approached the *rishi* in the hope of finding solace by just being near him. A little later, the merchant Samadhi did the same. It is to these two that the *rishi* recited the story of the Devi, "the mere hearing of which destroys sins and fills the heart of her devotees with courage and fortitude."

The painter concentrates on the atmosphere of the *ashram* as he brings in the many details of which the text speaks—the leopards curled like harmless cats, deer roaming about fearlessly, the dense but not forbidding foliage, and the eager disciple with text in hand.

Literature
See No. 217.

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219

THE GODDESS HOLDING A GOLDEN VESSEL
On verso, four lines of Sanskrit verse
Gouache on paper
Pahari, 3rd quarter of the 17th century
Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, No. 1970 (U)

Belonging to the Tantric Devi series associated with Basohli, the painting represents the Goddess in one of her softer, more benevolent aspects. The better known of this series show the terrifying forms of the goddess—Bhima, Bhadrakali, Shyama and the like—but it is evident from this and another painting in this very collection that the series must have been comprehensive, also incorporating the gentle forms. The Devi, here resplendent in her green skirt and white sari with golden floral patterns, clad in a brief yellow bodice, heavily bejewelled, stands against a bright orange-red ground which sets off the brilliant golden nimbus behind her head. In the extended right hand held chest level, she holds a golden vessel, perhaps with the promise of the elixir of life, toward her devotees. The crown is very prominent, with lotus buds topping its three visible points, but even more noticeable are the blue-green beetle wing cases which substitute for real, inset emeralds in her golden crown. That the Devi is still Tantric is clear from her dark collyrium-like complexion—in Tantric worship, even Mahalakshmi is envisaged as possessing this complexion, although in other manifestations she is radiant—but none of the other associations (snakes, fangs, severed heads and arms, etc.) appear in this quiescent dazzling-colored work.

Literature

W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, *s.v.* Basohli.

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220

WOMAN DEVOTEE
Sandstone
11th century; from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh
66 x 56 cm
Allahabad Museum, Allahabad, No. 281



This exquisitely bejewelled lady, sadly damaged, must have stood at one time like a humble devotee. Her hands, held in homage (*anjali mudra*) against her full breasts, are filled with flowers carried as offerings. Her face bears an expression of utter calm and concentration; gaze fixed on the tip of the nose, she stands like an unflickering lamp. Inevitably the eye wanders to her superbly wrought jewelry. The heavy sculptured armbands, the pearl necklaces of many strands falling against her bare breasts and taking their contours, the finely made torque around the neck, the intricate *kundalas* with *makara* heads in the ears, are but a part of her total adornment. Equally decorative and inventive is the large coiled bun of hair held in place by pearl strings and set against a halo of finely chiseled lotus petals. Above the head where little ringlets of hair are seen is a kind of lotus-bowl which, Pramod Chandra has suggested, might have supported five *lingas*; thus he sees this as a bust of Parvati. That she is no common mortal is clear from the *vidyadhara* couples carrying garlands, carved on either side of her head toward the top.

All the ornamentation and craftsmanlike detail does not detract from the serenity of the image. Working within the parameters of the style developed under the Chandellas at Khajuraho and related centers, the sculptor was aware of the erotic possibilities of the feminine form, but he succeeds in subordinating the physical to an inner beauty.

Literature

Pramod Chandra, *Stone Sculpture in the Allahabad Museum*, Varanasi, 1970, No. 425, pl. CXLI.

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APPENDICES

A. Sentiments (*Rasas*) and Their Corresponding Moods

RASA	*BHAVA*
1. **Shringara** (the erotic)	***rati*** (love)
2. **Hasya** (the comic)	***hasa*** (mirth, playfulness)
3. **Karuna** (the pathetic)	***shoka*** (sorrow)
4. **Raudra** (the furious)	***krodha*** (anger)
5. **Vira** (the heroic)	***utsaha*** (energy)
6. **Bhayanaka** (the terrible)	***bhaya*** (fear)
7. **Bibhatsa** (the odious)	***jugupsa*** (disgust)
8. **Adbhuta** (the marvelous)	***vismaya*** (astonishment)
9. **Shanta** (the quiescent)[a]	***shama*** (tranquility)

[a]Later writers added Shanta, a ninth *rasa*, not mentioned by Bharata in the *Natyashastra*. Some writers speak of other *rasas*, including Bhakti, (devotion) Vatsalya (parental affection), Sauhardra (amity), Karpanya (wretchedness), Madhurya (sweetness) and the like, but most authoritative writers maintain that there are only nine principal *rasas*.

B. The Thirty Three Complementary Emotional States (vyabhicharibhavas)

Sanskrit term	*Equivalent in English in Manomohan Ghosh's translation of Bharata's Natyashastra*[a]	*Equivalent in English in Ballantyne and Pramoda Dasa Mitra's translation of Vishvanatha's Sahitya Darpana*[b]
1. alasya	indolence	indolence
2. amarsha	indignation	impatience of opposition
3. apasmara	epilepsy	dementedness
4. asuya	envy	envy
5. autsukya	impatience	longing
6. avahittha	dissimulation	dissembling
7. avega	agitation	flurry
8. chapalata	inconstancy	unsteadiness
9. chinta	anxiety	painful reflection
10. dainya	depression	depression
11. dhriti	contentment	equanimity
12. garvva	arrogance	arrogance
13. glani	weakness	debility
14. harsha	joy	joy
15. jadata	stupor	stupefaction
16. mada	intoxication	intoxication
17. marana	death	death
18. mati	assurance	resolve
19. moha	distraction	distraction
20. nidra	sleeping	drowsiness
21. nirvveda	despondency	self-disparagement
22. shanka	apprehension	apprehension
23. shrama	weariness	weariness
24. smriti	recollection	recollection
25. supta	dreaming	dreaming
26. trasa	fright	alarm
27. ugrata	cruelty	sternness
28. unmada	insanity	derangement
29. vibodha	awaking	awaking
30. vishada	despair	despondency
31. vitarka	deliberation	debate
32. vrida	shame	shame
33. vyadhi	disease	sickness

[a]Manomohan Ghosh (trans. and ed.), *The Natyashastra: A Treatise on Ancient Indian Dramaturgy and Histrionics, Ascribed to Bharata-Muni*. rev. 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1967.

[b]*Sahitya Darpana*, Vishvanatha-kaviraja, Haridas Siddhantavagisha, Calcutta, 1953.

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C. Elements of the Different *Rasas* According to Vishvanatha's *Sahitya Darpana*[a]

Rasa (sentiment)	***Bhava*** (mood)	***Vibhavas*** (determinants)	***Anubhavas*** including ***sattvika*** states (consequents)	***Vyabhicharibhavas*** (complementary emotional states)	***Color***	***Presiding Deity***
1. SHRINGARA	***rati*** (love)	A. ***Substantial*** *(alambana):* i. *Nayikas* (excluding another's wife, and a courtesan, if not honestly enamored) ii. *Nayakas* **B. Excitant** (uddipana) the moon, sandalwood ointment, humming of bees, etc.; an empty house, secluded grove, etc.	motions of eyebrows, glances, kissing, embracing, etc.	any except side-cruelty, death, indolence, disgust	blue-black	Vishnu
2. HASYA	***hasa*** (mirth, playfulness)	**A. Substantial** whatever a person laughs at, when he beholds it distorted in respect of form, speech or gesture **B. Excitant** pertinent gestures	closing of eyes, smiling countenance	drowsiness, indolence dissembling, etc.	white	Shiva
3. KARUNA	***shoka*** (sorrow)	**A. Substantial** object sorrowed for **B. Excitant** the body being burnt, etc.	cursing one's destiny, falling on the ground, wailing, change of color, sighs, sobs, stupor, raving, etc.	indifference, fainting, epilepsy, sickness, debility, recollection, weariness, sensibility, madness, anxiety, etc.	dove-colored	Yama
4. RAUDRA	***krodha*** (anger)	**A. Substantial** The enemy **B. Excitant** behavior enhanced by blows of the fist, falling, rudeness, cutting and tearing, fights and confusion	knitting of eyebrows, biting of lips, swelling of the arms, threatening gestures, brandishing weapons, reviling, angry looks, boasting	cruelty, horripilation, flurry, perspiration, trembling, intoxication, delirium, impatience	red	Rudra

[a] *Sahitya Darpana, Vishvanatha-kaviraja.* Haridas Siddhantavagisha, Calcutta, 1953.

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Rasa (sentiment)	*Bhava* (mood)	*Vibhavas* (determinants)	*Anubhavas* including ***sattvika*** states (consequents)	*Vyabhicharibhavas* (complementary emotional states)	*Color*	*Presiding Deity*
5. VIRA	***utsaha*** (energy)	A. **Substantial** persons to be conquered B. **Excitant** behavior of the persons to be conquered; recipients of liberality	seeking allies, giving up possessions	firmness, resolve, pride, recollection, horripilation	yellow	Indra
6. BHAYANAKA	*bhaya* (fear)	A. **Substantial** women and weak persons; that by which fear is produced B. **Excitant** fierce gestures	change of color, stammering, fainting, perspiration, horripilation, trembling, looking around	aversion, agitation, bewilderment, terror, debility, prostration, doubt, epilepsy, confusion, death	black	Kala
7. BIBHATSA	***jugupsa*** (disgust)	A. **Substantial** stinking flesh, fibre, fat, presence of worms	spitting, averting the face, closing the eyes	bewilderment, epilepsy, agitation, sickness, death	blue	Mahakala
8. ADBUTA	***vismaya*** (wonder)	A. **Substantial** anything supernatural B. **Excitant** the greatness of the qualities of that supernatural thing or occurrence	stupefaction, perspiration, horripilation, stammering, speech, agitation, opening the eyes too wide	debate, flurry, confusion, joy	golden	Gandharva
9. SHANTA	***shama*** (tranquility)	A. **Substantial** emptiness and vainness of all things on account of their being lasting: God B. **Excitant** holy hermitages, sacred places, places of pilgrimage, pleasant groves, and the like, society of great men	horripilation	self-disparagement, joy, rememberance, resolve, kindness towards all beings	color of jasmine and the moon	Narayana

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GLOSSARY

Adbhuta: The eighth sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes an experience of the marvelous; it is aroused by the enduring emotion of wonder (*vismaya*).

Aghori: Member of one of the sects of Hindu *yoga*.

Agni: The Hindu god of fire.

agni pariksha: Ordeal by fire, such as Sita undergoes to prove her purity.

Akbari: Usually refers to painting under the patronage of India's energetic Mughal emperor Akbar (1556–1605).

Alakshmi: The form of the goddess who is also known as the mother of the *bhutas* or *pretas*.

alambana vibhavas: Substantial determinants; elements that are of central importance to the evocation of a particular *rasa*, such as the main characters; (see also *uddipana vibhava*, the second variety of *vibhava*).

alidha: A posture in which the supporting leg is bent and the other leg extended to the side.

ananda: A state of spiritual bliss.

Angada: In the *Ramayana*, one of the heroic monkeys in the monkey army that fights with Rama against Ravana.

Aniruddha: Krishna's grandson.

anubhavas: Consequents; the appropriate elements such as gesture, pose, and glance, that indicate certain emotional states (*sthayibhava*).

anukampa: Compassion; an aspect of the pathetic sentiment (Karuna *rasa*).

artha: Wealth; one of the four aims of life (*purusharthas*).

asura: A powerful type of demon.

asvadana: Literally tasting (see *rasasvadana*).

ashvamedha: Ancient sacrifice in which a ruler proves the limitless extent of his authority by allowing a horse to wander freely, and then fighting anyone who challenges its right to pass.

atihasita: Excessive laughter.

Avadhi: Dialect of Hindi spoken around Oudh, and between the Yamuna and Ganga Rivers.

avatara: Incarnation; a manifestation of Vishnu on earth in human form; Vishnu is thought to have had ten incarnations.

Balarama: Krishna's brother; in art, he is often depicted with white skin and carrying a plowshare.

Banasura: A devotee of Shiva; also, the demon-king and father of Usha.

Baramasa (The Twelve Months): Poems describing lovers during the twelve months of the year.

Bhagavad Gita: A section of the *Mahabharata* in which Krishna instructs the hero Arjuna on the meaning of existence.

Bhagavata Purana: A devotional text describing the incarnations of Vishnu, including his life as Krishna; the text is frequently illustrated with miniature paintings.

Bhairava (the fierce one): Refers to any of several furious, destructive manifestations Shiva takes on; or specifically to Shiva when he wanders cursed after decapitating Brahma.

bhanga (bend): Posture, pose in which the figure bends in some direction; see *tribhanga*.

bhava: One of the eight moods or emotional states that can lead to the experience of *rasa*.

bhavabhasa, bhavodaya, bhava-sandhi, bhava-shabalatva: An incomplete or imperfect aesthetic experience, one in which *rasa* is not experienced (see also *nirasa*,*rasabhasa*).

bhaya: Fear; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicts the terrible sentiment (Bhayanaka *rasa*).

Bhayanaka: The sixth sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes an experience of the terrifying; it is aroused by the enduring emotion of fear (*bhaya*).

Bhishma: One of the Kaurava clan in the *Mahabharata* epic.

bhutas: Malignant beings who plague those who neglect to perform propitiary rites; they eat flesh and dwell in the cremation ground.

Bhuvaneshwari: An aspect of the goddess and one of the ten *mahavidyas*, she represents the forces of the material world.

bimba: A kind of fruit round, full, and red in color.

bodhisattva: One who has attained spiritual enlightenment but postpones his reward of earthly release so that he may share the gift of his knowledge with others.

Bibhatsa: The seventh sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes an experience of the odious; it is aroused by the emotion of disgust (*jugupsa*).

Brahma: A Hindu god sometimes grouped in a triad with Vishnu and Shiva; he is often identified with the act of creation.

Brahmi: The earliest known script used for writing Sanskrit; a precursor of Devanagari.

Brahmin (also Brahman): Member of the caste considered to be the ritually most pure; only members of the Brahmin caste may become priests.

Buddha: The founder and supreme teacher of the Buddhist religion; the historical Buddha was born as Prince Shakyamuni, and forsook his royal life to seek ultimate knowledge.

Buddhism: A protestant form of Hinduism, based on the teachings of the Buddha.

Chamunda: See Kali.

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Chandayana (also known as the *Laur Chanda*): A tragedy by Mulla Daud about the star-crossed lovers, Laur (or Laurik) and the beautiful Chanda.

Chandra: The Hindu god of the moon.

Chaurapanchashika (Fifty Stanzas of the Thief of Love): Bilhana's 11th century Sanskrit love-lyric of a forbidden love between a girl and her tutor. A style of pre-Mughal miniature painting is named "the *Chaurapanchashika* group" after an important series of paintings illustrating the poem.

chauri (Sanskrit *chamara*): A fly-whisk made from a yak's tail, it is often held by those attending on gods or kings.

choli: The short, tight blouse worn with a *sari*.

danavas: Daughters of the goddess Diti and frequently enemies of the gods.

darbar: Royal assembly of the entire court.

Dasharatha: The king of Ayodhya and father of Rama.

daya: Synonym for *anukampa*.

Deccani: Term referring to painting done in the south-central section of India, known as the Deccan.

deva: Sanskrit term meaning "god".

Devanagari (writing of the city of the gods): The script in which Sanskrit and Hindi are written.

Devi: The supreme mother goddess; the various goddesses such as Parvati and Durga can be regarded as manifestations of her.

Devi Mahatmya: Also known as the *Durga Charitra*; a section of the *Markandeya Purana*, it narrates the exploits of the goddess Durga, and forms the primary source for her worship.

dharma: Cosmic order, law; correct action; duty performed for its own sake, without thought of reward; one of the four aims of life (*purusharthas*).

dhatura: A shrub bearing spade-shaped leaves and trumpet-shaped flowers; it is sacred to Shiva.

dhoti: A cloth garment worn by males, it is wrapped around the waist, and may hang to the thighs or ankles.

dhyana: Object of meditation.

Dipavali: The Indian festival of lights, celebrated in autumn.

djinn: A spirit created from fire and possessing supernatural powers.

dosha (fault): A flaw in a work of art that prevents it from inspiring *rasa*.

Drona: One of the leaders of the Kaurava army in the *Mahabharata*.

Draupadi: The wife to all four Pandava brothers in the *Mahabharata*.

Durga: A warrior form of the goddess, created to destroy the demon Mahishasura whom the gods could not control.

dvarapala: Door guardian; usually presented in pairs flanking the doorway to a shrine, their function is to ward off evil from the sacred interior.

fakir: A Muslim holy man.

gadi: A cushion; or a throne with cushions on it.

gana: An attendant; often one of the fat dwarves depicted in comic poses, attending Shiva.

Gandhara: Region along the northwest border of India and modern Pakistan; an area with close ties to Hellenistic culture in the 1st to 4th centuries A.D., when Gandharan art contained substantial Greek and Roman elements.

gandharva: A celestial male being; a *gandharva* is associated with the Adbhuta *rasa*.

Ganesha: The elephant-headed god, one of the two sons of Shiva and Parvati.

Ganga: The goddess personifying the sacred Ganga (or Ganges) river.

Garuda: The man-bird who serves and transports Vishnu (his *vahana*); he is a natural enemy of snakes.

ghat: A flight of steps leading down to a water-tank or river.

gharana: An extended family or clan in which artistic traditions are passed to succeeding generations.

Gita Govinda: Jayadeva's 12th century lyric about Krishna's love affair with the *gopi* Radha; the text is frequently illustrated by series of miniature paintings.

gopa, gopi: Boys and girls who tend cows; during Krishna's youth, they were his playmates and lovers.

Gupta: The name of the dynasty that flourished in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. in north central India; also the name of the art style flourishing under that dynasty and just after its decline.

hamsa: A goose or a swan; the theriomorphic form of Brahma.

Hanuman: The heroic monkey devoted to Rama; his feats of strength and courage help Rama defeat Ravana.

hasa: Laughter, mirth, playfulness; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicits the comic sentiment (Hasya *rasa*).

Hasya: The second sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes the comic experience; it is aroused by the emotion of laughter (*hasa*).

Hayagriva: A horse-necked form of Vishnu.

Hindi: A modern language spoken in much of North India, it is derived from the ancient language of Sanskrit.

Hinduism: Any of a number of widely variant sects indigenous to South Asia (excluding Buddhism and Jainism) based on the ancient hymns, the Vedas.

huqqa (hookah): A large pipe used to cool tobacco or opium smoke by filtering it through a vessel of water.

Indra: The god of rainstorms and war who rules the celestial kingdom; he is associated with the Vira *rasa*.

ishta: One's favorite deity.

Jainism: A religious movement historically founded in the 5th century A.D. by the teacher, Mahavira; it is a heterodox departure from Hinduism, and its heroes are sages and teachers instead of Shiva, Vishnu or the Goddess.

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jama: Gathered cotton pants that are tight at the ankles and loose around the hips and thighs.

jataka: One of the many tales, probably folk in origin, that serve as parables in Buddhist literature.

Jayadeva: See *Gita Govinda*.

jina: In Jainism and Buddhism, one who has attained supreme knowledge.

jugupsa: Disgust; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicits the odious sentiment (Bibhatsa *rasa*).

Kala: The god of Death and Time; he is associated with the Bhayanaka *rasa*.

Kali (the dark goddess): A destructive and hideous form of the Goddess generated to destroy the evil demon Raktabija; also called "Chamunda" for her victory over the demons Chanda and Munda.

kama: Love; one of the four aims of life (*purusharthas*).

Kama: The god of romantic love; he inspires love with arrows made of flowers.

Kamsa: Krishna's evil uncle who usurps Krishna's throne and tries many times to kill him.

Karna: One of the Kaurava clan in the *Mahabharata* epic.

Karttikeya: One of the two sons of Shiva and Parvati; he is often illustrated with six heads.

Karuna: The third sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes the experience of mercy, pity; it is aroused by the emotion of sorrow (*shoka*).

Kathakali: A colorful form of dance-drama from the South Indian state of Kerala.

Keshavadasa: Hindi poet of the 16th century; see *Rasikapriya*; also the author of the *Kavipriya*.

Kharoshthi: An alphabet that evolved in the Gandhara area, probably beginning in the 6th century B.C.; it is an Indian script for an Indian language, but it absorbed many letters and words from Aramaic.

Krishna: One of Vishnu's ten earthly incarnations; an extremely popular god, he is worshipped in many stages of his life on earth, his mischievous childhood, his amorous youth, and his wise maturity.

krodha: Anger; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicits the furious sentiment (Raudra *rasa*).

Kshatriya: Member of the warrior and ruler caste.

lakshana: Characteristic signs that distinguish image types; also, the connotation of a word.

Lakshmana: Rama's devoted younger brother.

Lakshmi: The goddess of fortune and a consort of Vishnu.

Lanka: The ancient capital of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), once ruled by the demon king Ravana.

Laur Chanda: See *Chandayana*.

madanika: A lovely woman, one who embodies passion (*madana*).

Mahabharata: One of India's great epics; it describes the rivalry between the heroic Pandavas and their cousins, the Kauravas.

Mahakala: An angry manifestation of Avalokitesvara and protector of the Buddhist law; he is associated with the Bibhatsa *rasa*.

mahavidyas: The ten goddesses of Tantric Hinduism, they represent the ten forms of knowledge and magical powers; they are Black Kali, Tara, Sodashi, Bhuvaneshvari, Bhairavi, Chinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagala, Matangi, and Kamala.

makara: Fantastic animal that may resemble a crocodile or may be a composite of various creatures; it is associated with water symbolism.

mandala: A diagram for meditation; a pattern, often underlying depictions of various subjects, which when meditated upon, yields deep spiritual knowledge.

manini: A devoted woman, a woman in love.

mantra: A magical sound chanted in worship and meditation.

matrika: See *shakti*.

moksha: Enlightenment's ultimate release of the spirit from the the bonds of earthly existence; one of the four aims of life (*purusharthas*).

Mrigavat: A 16th century romance in Avadhi about a prince's love for the doe-eyed Mrigavati.

mudra: Hand gesture expressing mood or action; an elaborate language of *mudras* in the Indian arts describes complex and subtle meanings without the use of words.

Mughal: Referring to the Muslim dynasty that ruled much of India, with varying degrees of authority, from the early 16th century A.D. until the arrival of the British.

muni: Reclusive sage who has renounced earthly comforts.

Naishadhacharita: A poem by Shriharsha based on the *Mahabharata* story of the lovers Nala and Damayanti.

Nanda: The foster father of Krishna in the village of Vraja.

Nandi: The bull who is Shiva's mount (*vahana*).

Narasimha: The fourth of Vishnu's ten incarnations, he comes to earth in a form that is half man and half lion.

Narayana: The personification of Vishnu's energy and creative power; he is associated with the Shanta *rasa*; also, the name of the grandfather of Visvanatha (see *Sahitya Darpana*).

naskh: A flowing, elegant Arabic script.

Nataraja: The manifestation of Shiva as lord of the dance; the dance he performs controls the destructive and creative forces of the universe.

Natha: Member of one of the sects of Hindu *yoga*.

natya: The arts of the stage.

Natya Shastra: A treatise on the arts, particularly the arts of the theater, written by the sage Bharata.

Nayak: Title of the princes in south India who ruled during and after the Vijayanagara period (14th to 16th centuries A.D.)

nayaka, nayika: Hero, heroine.

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nirasa (devoid of *rasa*): The term describes aesthetic experiences that do not succeed in evoking *rasa* (see also *bhavabhasa*, *rasabhasa*).

paan: A delicacy of various condiments and betel nut wrapped in a betel leaf.

Pahari: From the Hindi word *pahar* (hill); the term refers to miniature painting done in the Panjab hills between the 17th and 19th centuries A.D..

pandit: A wise man.

Parvati: The wife of Shiva; her name means "Daughter of the Mountains," as her father is thought to be the god of the Himalaya mountains.

pauranik: From the *Puranas*.

pishachas: Malignant beings who plague those who neglect to perform propitiary rites; they eat flesh and dwell in the cremation ground.

Prajapati (Lord of the Creatures): The title can refer to Brahma, Indra, or one of several sages.

pretas: Spirits hungering for blood, who follow the destructive manifestations of the goddess.

Prithvi: The Earth goddess whom Varaha rescues.

Purana: Texts containing ancient legends about the gods and history.

purusharthas: The four aims of life: right action (*dharma*), pleasure (*kama*), wealth (*artha*), and spiritual liberation (*moksha*).

raasa: A dance done by Krishna with the *gopis*.

Radha: Krishna's favorite lover among the *gopis*.

Ragamala: A cycle of poems personifying each of the *ragas* as princes accompanied by wives (*raginis*); the text is frequently illustrated by a series of paintings of these personifications, set in the atmospheres appropriate to each *raga*.

raga: A musical mode upon which a musician improvises variations; the *ragas* are evocative of various moods, and each is suited to a particular season and time of day.

raja: A Sanskrit term meaning "ruler."

Rajasthani: Referring to the desert area of India southeast of the Indo-Pakistan border; also a term for the bright style of miniature painting done in the cities of Rajasthan from about the 16th to 18th centuries A.D.

Rajput: One of the Hindu rulers of North India's princely states before the advent of the Mughal emperors.

rakshasas: Forest-dwelling demons; Ravana was their king, and they formed his army when he fought Rama.

Rama: Vishnu's seventh incarnation; the pure and virtuous prince of Ayodhya whose life is the subject of the *Ramayana*.

Ramayana: One of India's two great epics, it relates the life of Rama, who is exiled to the forest and who must rescue his wife when she is abducted by the demon Ravana; the text is frequently illustrated by series of miniature paintings.

rasa: A Sanskrit term for the sap or juice of plants; in the theory of Indian art, it refers to the aesthetic delight produced in the viewer's mind by emotions (*bhavas*), setting (*vibhavas*), and permanent emotional states (*sthayibhavas*) that a successful work of art can evoke in a sensitive viewer.

rasabhasa (semblance of flavor): An incomplete or imperfect aesthetic experience (see also *bhavabhasa*, *nirasa*).

Rasagangadhara: A treatise by Jagannatha that includes a discussion of the meaning of the term *rasa*.

Rasamanjari (A Cluster of Delights): by the 15th century poet Bhanudatta; this text, which describes types of lovers, is frequently illustrated by series of miniature paintings.

rasasvadana (tasting of flavor): The experience of aesthetic fulfillment.

rasavat, rasavant: A work of art possessing *rasa*.

rasika (taster): A connoisseur, one whose sensitivity to the arts allows him or her to experience *rasa*.

Rasikapriya: A 16th century poem by Keshavadasa, frequently illustrated by series of miniature paintings; the poem discusses love through the paradigm of Krishna's and Radha's affair.

rasili: Charged with *rasa*.

rati: Romantic love; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicits the erotic sentiment (Shringara *rasa*).

Raudra: The fourth sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes the experience of rage; it is aroused by the emotion of anger (*krodha*).

Ravana: The demon king of Lanka who abducts Rama's wife.

rishi: A holy ascetic, a seer.

romancha: Horripilation; the response of having one's hair stand on end in terror.

Rudra: The fierce deity of the Vedic hymns who is identified with the later god Shiva; he is associated with the Raudra *rasa*.

rudraksha: Dark red beads made from dried seeds; they are sacred to Shiva.

sadhu: Hindu holy man.

Sahitya Darpana (The Mirror of Composition): A 14th century text on poetics by Visvanatha.

sakhi: A woman's female confidante.

shalabhanjika: The motif of a woman touching a tree, imparting her fertility to the tree through the fecundity of her touch.

samadhi: Intense meditation; in Buddhism, the final stage of devotion.

samapada: The posture of balance in which the torso and legs are straight, and the weight distributed evenly on both feet.

sambhoga: The type of love experienced by lovers who are not separated.

sannyasi: A holy man who has abandoned the world of possessions and family to wander in search of spiritual enlightement.

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Sanskrit: The ancient language of India, and a member of the Indo-European language group; most of the languages now spoken throughout North India are vernacular descendants of Sanskrit.

sarangi: A stringed musical instrument, somewhat like a violin.

Saraswati: The goddess of learning and music.

sari: An ankle-length wrapped garment worn by Indian women.

sattva: The creative force in the universe; the opposite of *tamasa*.

sattvika bhavas: Involuntary bodily responses to emotions.

shakti (female energy): The energizing counterpart of male deities; the eight *shaktis*, also referred to as the mother goddesses (*matrikas*), are: Maheshwari, Narasimhi, Varahi, Aindri, Brahmi, Vaishnavi, Yami and Kali/Chamunda.

shama: Serenity, equanimity; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicits the quiescent sentiment (Shanta *rasa*).

Shaiva: Associated with Shiva.

Shanta: The ninth sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes the experience of calm; it is aroused by the emotion of tranquility (*shama*).

Sharabha: An emanation of Shiva that subdues the raging Narasimha.

shardula: See *vyala*.

Shiva: One of the most popular and powerful gods in the Hindu pantheon, Shiva is associated with asceticism and the destruction of evil. He appears in many manifestations; his most common attributes are the trident, the *linga*, matted locks of hair, and ashen skin. He is associated with the Hasya *rasa*.

shivalinga: The phallic emblem of Shiva's cosmic energy; the emblem may be highly abstracted and aniconic, or it may bear the face or full figure of Shiva.

Shiva Purana: One of the several *Purana* texts that focuses on the stories and worship of Shiva.

shoka: Sorrow; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicits the pathetic sentiment (Karuna *rasa*).

Shringara: The first sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes the experience of erotic love; it is aroused by the emotion of love (*rati*).

siddha: Reclusive sage who has renounced earthly comforts.

Sita: Rama's virtuous wife.

sthayibhava: The enduring emotional state produced in a viewer by the emotions (*bhavas*) evoked in a successful work of art.

stupa: A huge mound of earth, often faced with reliefs and encircled by carved railings, that contains Buddhist relics and is a focus for Buddhist worship.

Sufi: Referring to a mystical sect of Islam; or a follower of that sect.

Surdasa: 16th century Hindi poet; two of his works are the *Sur-sagar* and the *Suravali*, both containing devotional poems dedicated to Krishna.

Surya: God of the sun; he rides a chariot drawn by horses.

Suthra: Member of one of the sects of Hindu *yoga*.

sutra: Aphoristic teachings.

svabhava: Character, nature of a thing; intrinsic (*sva*) state of being (*bhava*).

Takri (or Takkari): A script used after 800 A.D. in the area around Kulu and Chamba for the local Sanskrit-based language.

tamasa: The dark aspect of creation; the destructive force necessary in the universal scheme to combat evil and to perpetuate the cycle of birth, destruction, and rebirth.

Tantric: Refers to sects of Hinduism and Buddhism in which the female principle is focal, and rites are esoteric, magical, and sometimes frightening.

Tara: A form of the goddess, particularly common in Buddhism.

torana: A gateway, often composed of an arching crossbar and two uprights.

tribhanga: The pose of three bends; in this graceful stance, the knee bends, the hip projects, and the head tilts so that the body forms an "S" curve.

Tripurasundari: Manifestation of Durga as "goddess of the triple city"; a focus of Tantric worship.

uddipana vibhavas: Excitant determinants; elements that are of secondary importance to the evocation of a particular *rasa*, such as setting or costume (see also *alambana vibhava*, the first variety of *vibhava*).

ugra: Fierce, angry, in reference to some manifestations of the gods.

Uma-maheshvara: A common image type consisting of Shiva with his wife Parvati (Uma is another of her names).

Usha: The goddess of Dawn.

utsaha: Energy; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicts the heroic sentiment (Vira *rasa*).

vahana: Vehicle; a creature who carries and protects a deity.

Vaishnava: Having to do with Vishnu; often, followers of Vishnu.

vanara: Monkey.

Varaha: The third incarnation of Vishnu in which he appears as a boar to rescue the earth from the bottom of the ocean.

vibhava: Determinant, cause; cues that arouse the mind and the senses, making them receptive to the moods (*bhavas*) that will produce in the viewer a fulfilling aesthetic experience; see *alambana vibhavas* and *uddipana vibhavas*.

vidushaka: In Sanskrit drama, the clown character who serves as a foil to the hero.

vidyadharas: Minor celestial beings, often shown in flight.

Vira: The fifth sentiment (*rasa*), it evokes an experience of the heroic: it is aroused by the emotion of energy (*utsaha*).

Virabhadra: The personification of Shiva's destructive power; he comes forth to destroy Daksha's sacrifice.

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Vishnu: One of the most powerful and popular gods in the Hindu pantheon, he is known as the Preserver for his ability to restore the cosmic balance of the universe. In each of his ten incarnations, Vishnu comes to earth to rescue it from disruptive forces. He is associated with the Shringara *rasa*.

Vishnudharmottaram: one of the principal instructive texts (*Puranas*), generally dated between the 5th and the 7th centuries A.D.; it explains the rules governing the arts, particularly that of painting.

vismaya: Astonishment; the emotion (*sthayibhava*) that elicits the marvelous sentiment (Adbhuta *rasa*).

Vraja: The village in which Krishna grows up.

Vrindavana: The area in which the young Krishna lived; containing the village of Vraja.

vyabhicharibhavas: Emotional states that arise from a work of art but are complementary or transitory, rather than central to the dominant mood of the work.

vyala: Fantastic animal motif, resembling a lion or tiger; also called a *shardula*.

yaksha: A male nature spirit, and a focus of early worship; in sculpture, he is represented as large and full of physical strength.

yakshi: Female nature spirit, often associated with trees; she may appear as a *shalabhanjika*, and her lush body carries strong fertility associations.

Yama: The Hindu god of death who conducts the deceased from this world; his attributes are his fangs and the noose he carries. He is associated with the Karuna *rasa*.

Yamuna: One of the great rivers of North India, it flows through Vraja, the town of Krishna's youth, as well as through modern New Delhi; it is often personified as a beautiful young woman standing on a turtle.

Yashoda: The foster mother of young Krishna in the village of Vraja.

yatra: Procession, especially in religious festivals.

yogi: A practitioner of the physical and philosophical discipline of yoga.

yogini: A goddess with fertility associations who possesses magical powers; in central India, a group of sixty-four yoginis are the focus of mystic and occult worship, as manifestations of the goddess that are at once destructive and beautiful.

(P.K.)

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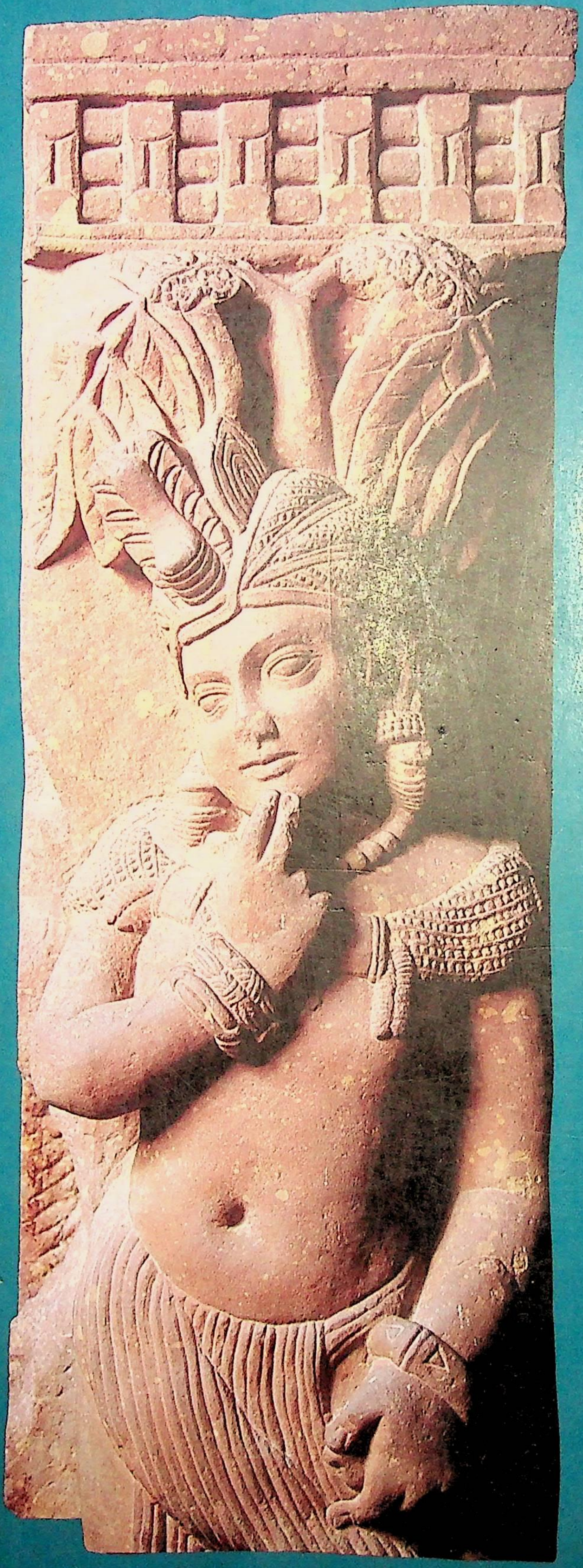
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ISBN 0-939117-00-2